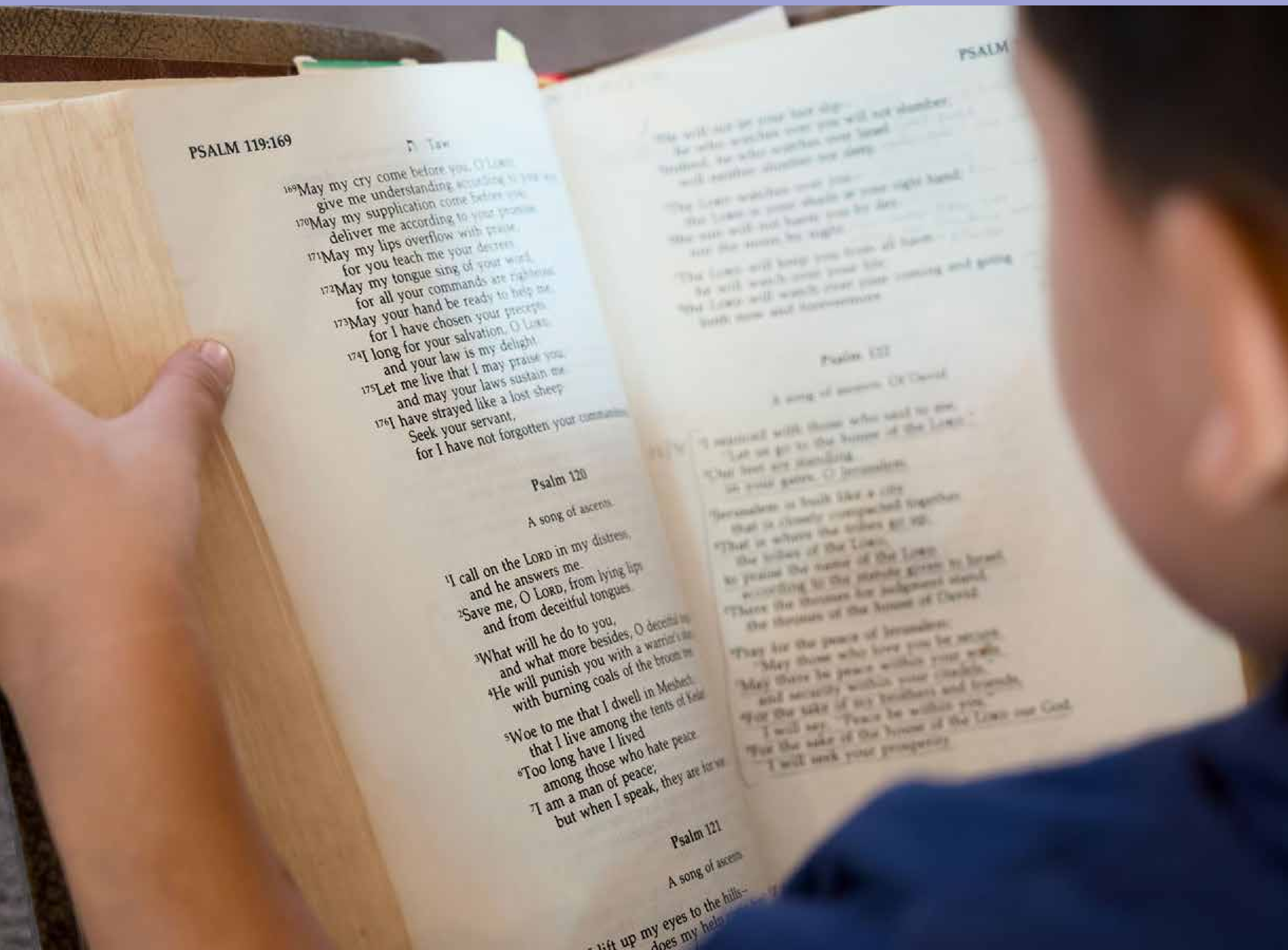




Into the Bible

**The purpose of into the Bible
is to get children into the Bible,
and to get the Bible into children.**

VOLUME 3 STEP 1: EXODUS 11-15



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General Introduction



INTO THE BIBLE is a way to help children and young people, and anyone for that matter, to understand the Bible better. It's a simple translation from the original languages of the Bible, together with explanations, to make the Bible more clear.

Each Step INTO THE BIBLE is made up of three parts:

- 1) A **translation**, so that children can understand the passage in order to be able to read it in their own Bible.
- 2) An **introduction** to the passage for Beginners, so that they can get to know the background to the passage they are reading. This includes the history, geography, the issues of the time, and people involved, the culture, etc.
- 3) A **Bible study** on the passage for young people, or for parents, or teachers to help them grasp what the point of each paragraph is, and what are the issues spoken about in the text .

The method of INTO THE BIBLE is to consult the Hebrew or Greek lexicons (dictionaries) to find out what meaning of the Hebrew/Greek word best fits the context of the passage, and will also make clear sense to a young reader. Where a word is difficult to understand I may turn it into a sentence to make sense of it. Where an issue is rather complicated, I use a footnote to explain it.

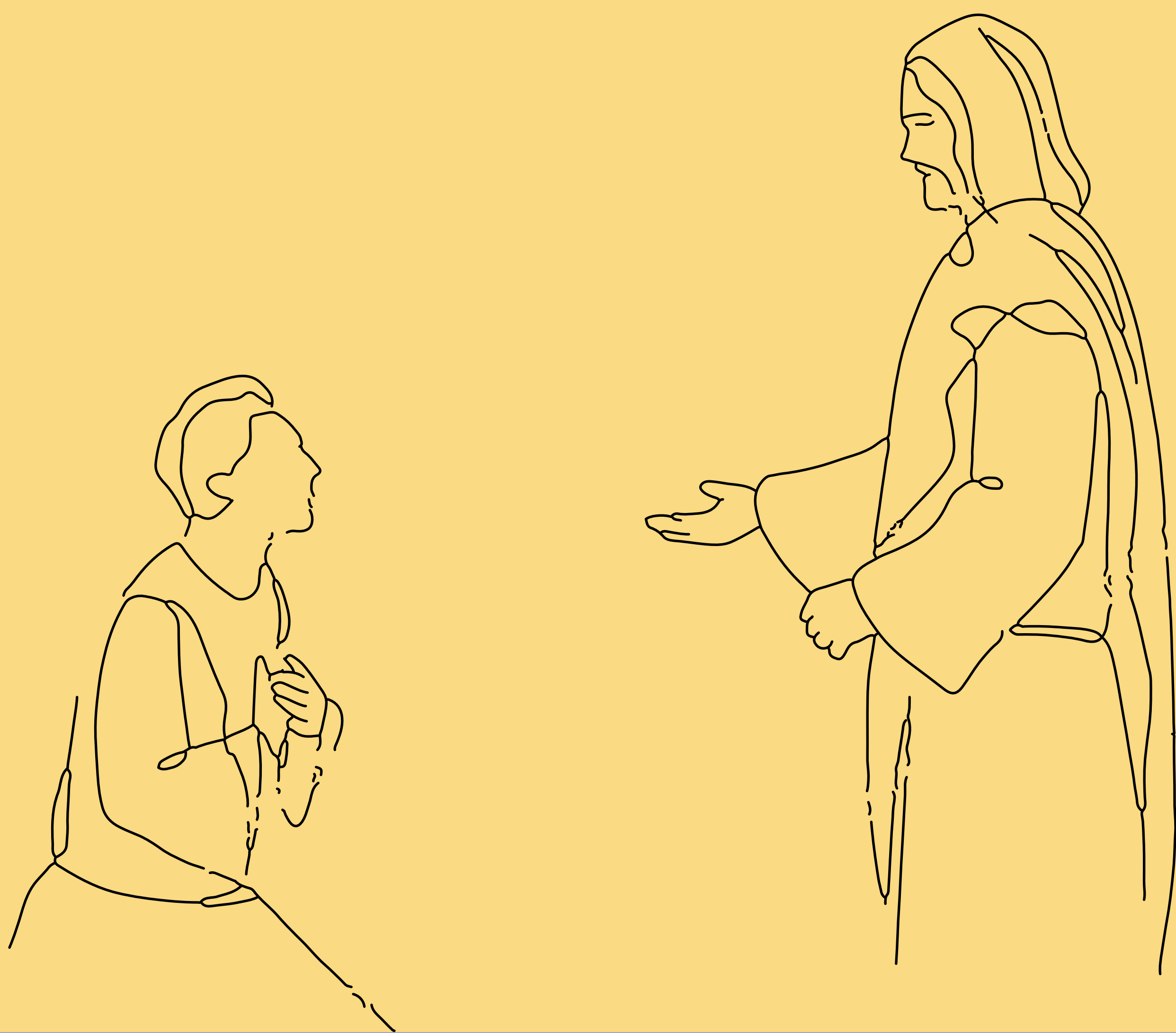
- INTO THE BIBLE is intended to prepare youngsters to be able to **read their own Bible.**
- INTO THE BIBLE is planned to **introduce children to most of the Bible.**
- INTO THE BIBLE is **educational.** It is meant to develop their **reading skills as well as their characters.** It can also be used by parents or teachers to teach their children. **The focus is on our children.**

Our children are our heritage from God, and the Bible is the heritage for our children, which is also from God. The purpose of Into the Bible is to get children into the Bible, and to get the Bible into children.

Yours in Christ,

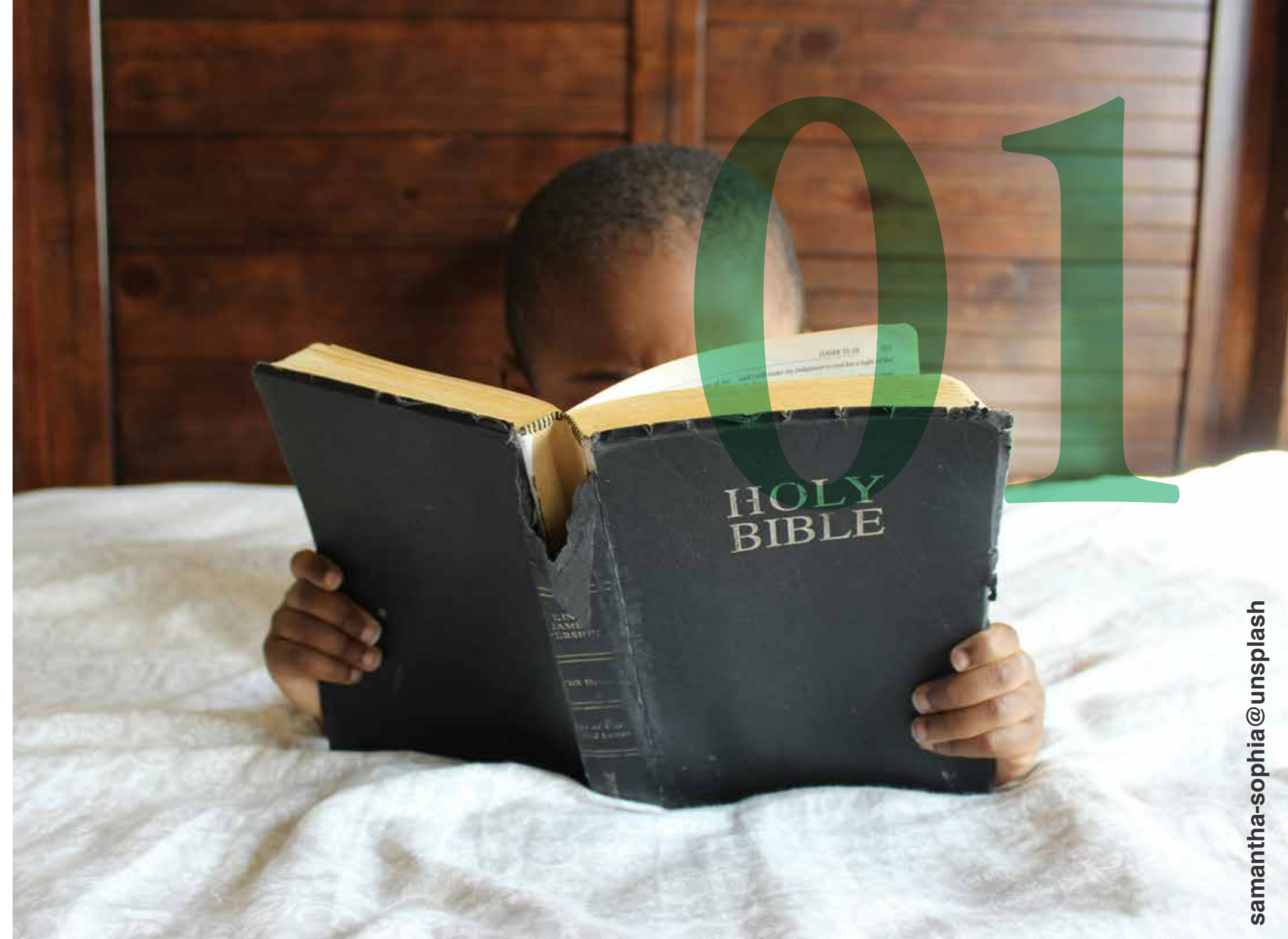
Peter Watson

Exodus 11-15



Exodus 11-15

A Simple Bible Translation



START HERE!

Read this simple translation to understand the passage, then read it in your own Bible.



CHAPTER 11

11:1-3 THE ISRAELITES GET READY TO LEAVE EGYPT

The Lord said to Moses: I am going to bring just one more disaster on Pharaoh and Egypt. After that he will let you leave Egypt. In fact, he is going to chase you right out of the country. You can be quite sure of that!

So go and tell this news to the people. Since you will now be leaving, every man should ask any local Egyptian for a good-bye gift, and every woman should ask any Egyptian lady for jewellery of silver and gold.

This was possible because the Lord had caused the whole country of Egypt to have a lot of respect for the Israelites. All the Egyptians had tremendous respect for Moses. He was highly regarded not only by Pharaoh's government officials, but by all the people of the country.

11:4-8 GOD TELLS MOSES WHAT WILL HAPPEN

Then Moses announced to the Israelites: This is what the Lord said: At about midnight I am going out myself, right through the land of Egypt.

Then every first-born in the land of Egypt will die. Every single one! From the first-born of Pharaoh, the ruler of the whole country, to the first-born of any slave-girl working with her millstone, each and every one will die. Even the first-born of all the cattle will die.

This will result in a dreadful, horrible cry of fear and grief right throughout the whole

country of Egypt. It will be worse than anything that has ever happened in the past, and nothing as terrible as this will ever happen again.

But among all the Israelites there will be absolute peace and quiet. Not even a dog will disturb the silence by barking at anyone or anything. This is how you will know that the Lord will treat the Egyptians and the Israelites completely differently.

Moses said to Pharaoh: I warn you that this is what God has told me he is going to do. He also told me that all these officials of yours will come to plead with me. They will bow down to me and beg me: Please go! You and all the people who accept your leadership, go! After that I shall leave. I shall leave for good! Moses turned away from Pharaoh and left. He was furious with Pharaoh.

11:9-10 GOD SAYS PHARAOH WILL NOT LISTEN

The Lord told Moses: Pharaoh won't listen to you. That is why I have to do so many amazing things in Egypt.

So Moses and Aaron did all these amazing things for Pharaoh to see. But Pharaoh just became intensely angry and stubborn. He utterly refused to let the Israelites leave the country.

CHAPTER 12

12:1-4 THE FEAST IN THE FIRST MONTH

God said to Moses and Aaron, when they were in Egypt:

This month, when you leave Egypt, is to be the first month of each year for you in future.

You must tell the whole nation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month, every year, they are to do something special. Each family must get a lamb. They are to have a feast to remember and celebrate what God is now going to do for you here in Egypt.

If the family is too small to eat a whole lamb by themselves, then they must join up with their nearest neighbour's family. You must work out how many people are needed to get together to eat a whole lamb.

12:5-11 HOW TO CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER

God said to Moses and Aaron: Make sure that there is nothing at all wrong with the lamb. The lamb you pick from the flock must be a male and one year old. You may take either a lamb from the flock or, if you do not have one, a kid from the goats.

It must be in your care until the 14th day of this month. Then the whole nation of Israel must slaughter it at the same time, in the evening.

They must take some of its blood and make a mark with it on the two posts on either side of their front door. They must also put some blood on the frame above the door. Every home where they eat the lamb must do this.

Then they must eat the meat that night. The meat must be roasted in the fire. They must also eat bread made without yeast, and with it herbs that are bitter to taste.

Do not eat the meat raw. The meat must be properly cooked, but do not boil it. It must not be cooked in water. The meat has to be roasted over the fire. Roast the whole lamb, its head, its legs and its insides. It is a lamb, not just a piece of meat!

Do not leave any of it uneaten until morning. If any of it is left over until morning it must be completely burnt up in the fire. There must be no scraps left from the lamb. Burn completely anything that is left over. Nothing must be wasted or thrown away or left to go bad.

When you sit down to eat your Passover dinner you must do the following: Do not dress smartly with your clothes hanging right down to the ground. Tuck them up under your belt as you would do if you were going out to work. Make sure you are wearing your walking shoes. You must also have the staff you carry around outside right there next to you. Eat your dinner as if you are ready to go straightaway on a long journey. You must have the dinner as if you are about to leave home.

This dinner is very special. It is the Passover for the Lord. The people who celebrate the Passover like this are the Lord's people. If they obey these instructions and orders, then the Lord is their God.

12:12-13 GOD WILL ATTACK EGYPT'S FIRST-BORN

God said: I am going to invade the land of Egypt myself. I am going to go out right through the whole country tonight, and I shall kill every single firstborn in Egypt. I shall kill not only the people, but also the firstborn of the animals. That will strike a big blow against all the gods of Egypt. People will have to learn that I am the only true God.

But the blood that you put on the doors of your homes where you live will be a sign that will save you from death. When I see that blood, I shall leave you alone. I shall pass over your house, and no harm will come to you. You will not get hurt at all when I hit the land of Egypt. I am going to hit them hard.

12:14-16 REMEMBER TO CELEBRATE THIS DAY

God said: This is a day you must always remember. Remember to thank God and enjoy him. Worship him and then stay loyal to him, generation after generation. This is something you must always do as a nation.

For seven days you must eat bread without any yeast in it. In fact, on the first day of the feast you must see to it that there is no yeast whatsoever anywhere in your home. Get rid of it altogether. If anyone does eat anything leavened, anything with yeast in it, he may no longer be a member of the nation of Israel. He will lose his citizenship in this country. That rule applies from the beginning of the first day of the feast, until the end of the seventh day. Do this so that you can all show your loyalty to God.

On the first day hold a special assembly for all the people. On the seventh day hold another special, holy assembly. It is for God. That day is for you to honour him. No work whatsoever may be done on those seven days. The only thing anyone is allowed to do is to cook food to eat. That is all you may do.

12:17-20 GOD INSISTS ON BREAD WITHOUT YEAST

When God gave instructions for how the Passover was to be remembered in future, he said: Celebrate the Passover as the feast of Unleavened Bread, for it was on this very day that I brought your great nation from the land of Egypt. So celebrate this day year after year for future generations. It is a special occasion, and you must always keep it up.

In the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, you must eat unleavened bread. You must keep this up until the evening of the twenty-first day of the month.

For seven days you are not allowed to have any yeast in your homes. If anyone eats leavened bread that person may no longer belong to the family of Israel. This applies to everyone, whether it is someone who was born in the land as an Israelite, or someone who used to be a foreigner but chose to become an Israelite.

You must NOT eat any leavened bread in any of your homes. You may eat only bread without yeast.

12:21-23 GETTING READY TO AVOID DANGER

Moses got all the leaders of Israel together and explained to them what the people must do to keep the Passover: Fetch your sheep for your families and slaughter them for the Passover.

Then take a bunch of hyssop (hiss-sip) and dip it in the blood that is in a basin. Splash

some of it on the doorframe, above the door and on both sides of the door. You must use the blood in the basin for this. Having done this it is most important that not a single one of you is allowed to go out of his home until morning.

So when the Lord comes along to attack the Egyptians, he will see the blood on top of the door and on the doorposts on both sides. Then the Lord will pass over that doorway and will not allow the angel doing the executing to go into that house to kill the first-born there.

12:24-28 ALWAYS CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER

Now you must keep up doing what I have told you to do, and you must make it a rule for you and your descendants. It is something you must always do, year after year.

When you come to the country that the Lord will give you, just as he promised, you must keep up this religious custom.

Your children may ask you, What does this custom mean to you?

Tell them: This is the Passover Sacrifice. It is done out of respect for the Lord. It is because he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he punished the Egyptians. The Lord spared our homes. We escaped that terrible punishment. The people knelt down and worshiped the Lord.

They then went off and did exactly what the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron to tell them. They did what God told them to do.

12:29-30 THE DEATHS OF THE FIRST-BORN

In the middle of the night, the Lord attacked Egypt. The Lord himself killed every firstborn in the land. None escaped. The first-born of Pharaoh was killed, although Pharaoh was the king in charge of the country. Even the firstborn of a helpless prisoner shut up in a jail, died. God also killed all the firstborn of the animals.

Then Pharaoh got up in the night, along with all his officials, as well as all the people of Egypt. A terrible howl went up from the entire country of Egypt. There was not a home where there was not someone who was dead.

12:31-32 PHAROAH GIVES IN TO MOSES

That night Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said: Alright, you can go! You may leave our country and my people. Yes, both you and the Israelites are free to leave. Go and worship the Lord, as you said.

You may also take your flock of sheep and your herd of cattle, just as you said. Now go! Just go! Get out, all of you! And please also say a prayer for me.

12:33-36 THE ISRAELITES LEAVE THE EGYPTIANS

The Egyptians were now very keen to send the Israelites away from their country as soon as possible. The Egyptians were scared that they would all die if the Israelites remained in their land any longer.

The Israelites left so quickly that there was no time for them to make bread. They took the bread-dough before it was leavened, from the wooden pans, and simply wrapped it in their clothes and flung the bundle over their shoulders.

Then the people of Israel did something else that Moses told them to do. They went and asked the Egyptians for some valuable and useful things to take with them. They asked for things made of silver and gold, and for good quality clothing.

The Lord made the Egyptians keen to give them what they asked for. The Egyptians actually gave away most of their best belongings to the Israelites because they were so afraid of God. They did not want God to punish them anymore. When people are scared they will give anything away.

12:37-39 THE ISRAELITES LEAVE EGYPT

At last the Israelites pulled out of Egypt. They left Rameses (Ram-m'sees) and went off to Succoth (Soo-cot). The crowd that left Egypt was huge: there were six hundred thousand grown-up men who walked away from Egypt, not counting the children.

They were also accompanied by a lot of other people who joined them to leave Egypt. The Israelites took with them herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and other farm animals - lots and lots of them.

They baked the bread-dough that they took away with them from Egypt. They made flat cakes, like sandwiches. They used unleavened bread because there was no time to use any yeast. This was because they were sent away from Egypt so suddenly that they had to leave hurriedly, and there was no time to prepare food for the journey.

12:40-42 THE NIGHT OF THE EXODUS

The length of time that the Israelites stayed in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

At the end of 430 years exactly, to the very day, all the different groups of Israelites left Egypt to serve the Lord. They left like a well-organised army. In fact, the organisation

of their departure was brilliant. There was no chaos or confusion as they went, despite their huge numbers.

That night, the Israelites held a vigil, that is, a night-watch. They kept watch through the hours of darkness. They were expecting God to do something great, and were excited. They used the time to pray. Their night-watch was for the Lord to get them out of the land of Egypt. That is why every year that night should be a vigil for all the Israelites to keep for the Lord. It is an anniversary for all future generations to keep and celebrate. The vigil that night was to be called the Passover.

12:43-47 RULES FOR THE PASSOVER

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: This is how you must keep the Passover when you get to the Promised Land. The celebration is a special privilege, so it is only for my people. The rule is that no outsider, no stranger or foreigner, is allowed to join in this feast.

On the other hand, any slave who has been bought by an Israelite may join in the Passover feast and celebration. That slave may join the celebration as long as he or she is also a genuine Israelite.

But if someone is staying with you only for a while, or you have hired him to work for a fixed time, he is not allowed to join in the feast.

The meal must be eaten in just the one house where the lamb was slaughtered and roasted. Everyone must gather to eat it together. Do not take any of the meat outside the house. It is too precious to be wasted or thrown away. Every-one must eat it inside, together. You must never break any bone of the slaughtered lamb.

In future the whole nation of Israel must celebrate the Passover every year.

12:48-51 WHAT ISRAEL MUST FOCUS ON

Here is a rule you must keep when you get to the Promised Land. There will be people who are not Israelites, living among you, such as people who do business with you, or people who want to live in your land. If any of them wants to join in the Passover, to remember what the Lord did for us, and to honour him, that person must be circumcised. This applies to any man or boy. Once he is circumcised, he is allowed to join in the Passover feast just as if he were born in the land of Israel. But if anyone is not circumcised, he may not eat at the Passover meal.

Once anyone living among you is circumcised, the Law of God will apply to him in exactly the same way that it applies to all Israelites who were born in the land of Israel.

All the people of Israel did just as the Lord told Moses and Aaron to do. They all did what they were told.

So on that famous day that followed the Passover, God brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. On that particular day, God got the whole nation out of slavery, and they left in good order.

CHAPTER 13

13:1-2 THE FIRST-BORN BELONG TO GOD

Again the Lord spoke to Moses. He said:

I want every first-born of every family to belong to me. They are special from now on, and must be dedicated to me. They are to be made holy. Every boy that is born, who is his mother's first son, is mine from now on. This applies not only to the people, but also to the animals. Every first-born male belongs to me.

13:3-7 CELEBRATE THE EXODUS

Moses explained to the people that they were to remember to celebrate the exodus in future: You must remember, and celebrate, this day that you came out of Egypt. Don't forget that you were helpless slaves there, but the Lord used his tremendous power, and got you out of that horrible slavery. To celebrate or commemorate the exodus, you must see to it that no leavened bread is eaten.

Today you are leaving Egypt for good. You are getting out in this month of Aviv (ah-veev), (which was late March or early April, somewhere around Easter time.)

The Lord is going to get you safely into the land of the Canaanites (kay-nin-nights) and even the Hittites (hit-ights) and the Amorites (am-aw-rights) and the Hivites (chi-vights, ch as in loch) and also the Jebusites (je-boo-sights, OR in Hebrew y'voo-see). As the Lord promised your ancestors, your forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he is going to give you a wonderful country where you will be able to enjoy life and have the good things you would like to have. Then in the land of Canaan you must remember to celebrate this Passover ceremony in this month of Aviv.

When you celebrate the Exodus in the Promised Land, you must eat bread without yeast for seven days. On the seventh day you must hold a special feast, a festival, to worship the Lord who has done this marvellous thing for our nation. That will be the sign that you appreciate what the Lord has done for you. He got you all out of Egypt against impossible odds, in super-quick time, and in brilliant good order.

So see to it that unleavened bread is eaten for seven days. There must be no sign of any leavened bread anywhere among you, nor any yeast anywhere on your property or in your territory. Get rid of all of it from all your homes.

13:8-10 REMEMBER THE EXODUS IN FUTURE

When in future you celebrate the Passover and the exodus you must tell your son the meaning and significance of the Passover. Say to him: This celebration is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.

This feast must be something to remind you of that wonderful experience, as if you had the word “EXODUS” written on your hand, or stamped on your forehead. This is to remind you to keep on talking about it. Use the feast to keep a record of what happened so that you do not lose sight of what the Passover was about. Do this so that you will always remember to talk about or discuss the law of the Lord. Never forget that the Lord brought you out of Egypt by his awesome power.

So you will always owe it to him to obey him. That is why you must keep this feast as a national custom at the proper time every year.

13:11-13 REDEEM EVERY FIRSTBORN

The Lord is going to get you into the land of the Canaanites, just as he promised your forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God will give their land to you.

In return, you must give every firstborn to the Lord, as well as the firstborn of any animal that is yours. The firstborn that are males are for the Lord.

But you may redeem every firstborn donkey by sacrificing a lamb in its place. If you do not buy it back from the Lord, or redeem it, then you are to offer it to the Lord by breaking its neck. The important thing to remember is that you must redeem every firstborn person among your sons.

13:14-16 WHAT IS THE PASSOVER FOR?

In the future, when your son asks you what this feast is for, and why we keep the Passover, then you tell him this: What the Lord did for us was amazing. By means of his astonishing power he brought us out of Egypt where we were helpless slaves.

We were in big trouble when Pharaoh got angry and stubborn, and absolutely refused to let us go. Then the Lord killed every single firstborn throughout the land of Egypt. He killed them, man and beast - the whole lot, the people and the animals as well. That's how the Egyptians knew that this was done by God. Only God could have done such

a thing. So that is the reason why I am sacrificing to the Lord. I am offering him every firstborn male I've got, and I am buying back from him, or redeeming, the firstborn of my sons. Since the Passover at the time of the Exodus, every firstborn belongs to the Lord.

This feast is like a sign. It is to remind you of the exodus the way a bracelet on your wrist would remind you of someone or something precious to you. It's a sign like a band around your head so that you never forget what the Lord did for us. The Lord brought us out of Egypt by his almighty power. That is what the Passover is always about.

13:17-18 THE ISRAELITES LEAVE EGYPT

Now when Pharaoh let the Israelites leave Egypt, God did not lead them along the road that goes to the territory of the Philistines. Today we call that territory the Gaza Strip. That way was actually the shortest distance from Egypt to Canaan, the Promised Land. This was because God realised that if the people had to face the prospect of war, they might very likely regret that they had left the safety of Egypt. In that case they would probably return to Egypt.

So God turned them away from going to the north, and took them to the south, along the desert road leading toward the Red Sea. Today this part of the Red Sea is called the Gulf of Suez. So the people of Israel left Egypt. They set off organised like an army.

13:19 JOSEPH'S BONES

As the Israelites left Egypt Moses made sure that he took Joseph's bones with him. Hundreds of years before, Joseph had made the younger Israelites make a special promise. He made them swear an oath. Joseph said: One day God will certainly come to take charge of you to get you back to the land of Canaan. When that happens, you must take my bones from here in Egypt. Take them with you to Canaan. You must promise me that you will do this. Swear to it!

13:20-22 GOD'S CLOUD LEADS ISRAEL

The Israelites packed up their tents at Succoth (soo-cot), the Tent City, and moved to Etham (eh-tum) where they pitched their tents. Etham was on the border between Egypt's Nile Delta and the Sinai Desert (sigh-nigh). It was somewhere near where the Suez Canal is today, not very far from the Red Sea. They were somewhere on the main road that leads to the south of Palestine, where the mountains begin. It is the road across the Sinai Desert to Beersheba (beer-sheeba OR in Hebrew, behr-sh'va).

The Lord was leading them. By day he guided them along the way by means of a tall cloud, like a giant pillar. At night it became a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel during the day and during the night.

The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day or the pillar of fire by night. It remained in front of the people as they travelled.

CHAPTER 14

14:1-4 THE ISRAELITES CHANGE DIRECTION

The Lord contacted Moses again. He said to Moses:

Give orders to the Israelites. Tell them that they must turn back and set up camp at a place next to the sea. The Lord told them exactly where to go. He gave Moses the names of three places close together. You must pitch your tents there, right by the sea.

Then Pharaoh will come to the conclusion that the Israelites do not know where to go and are lost in the countryside. It will look to him as though the Israelites have got themselves trapped right up against the sea. He will think that they cannot get past the sea to the desert on the other side.

I shall then encourage Pharaoh to want to chase after them. But do not worry because in this way I am going to use Pharaoh and his whole army to get all the Egyptians to learn to respect me deeply. So the Israelites did what the Lord told Moses to do. They turned round, and went towards the sea. They pitched their tents right next to the sea.

14:5-9 PHARAOH'S ARMY CHASES THE ISRAELITES

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had gone, that they had run away from Egypt, Pharaoh completely changed his mind about them. So did his officials. They asked the question: What is this that we have done? We have let our Israelite slaves go free! They will no longer serve us. We should not have allowed them to go!

So Pharaoh ordered his royal military chariot to get ready to leave. He got all his people to go along with his decision.

He took his best chariots with him, six hundred elite chariots. Along with them he took all the chariots of Egypt, and even loaded a third soldier onto every chariot.

With this powerful army assembled, the Lord made Pharaoh, the Commander-in-Chief of Egypt's military, determined to bring the Israelites back. So he and his force set off and chased after the Israelites. As for the Israelites, they were leaving Egypt and slavery in high spirits.

The Egyptians raced after the Israelites and caught up with them camping by the sea. Pharaoh's whole military force turned up there, his horses and chariots and riders, and his army. They reached the area at the Entrance-to-the-Caves, with the Hill-of-the-Demon in sight.

14:10-12 THE ISRAELITES PANIC

As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites spotted his army approaching. They got an awful shock when they saw that the Egyptian military had set out after them. The Israelites were absolutely terrified, and cried out to the Lord to save them.

But their prayer was just part of their panic. They turned against Moses and argued with him. They criticised him for the trouble they were now in. They became angry and bitter toward him because of their great fear. They were rude to him and shouted: Why did you bring us out of Egypt? You have brought us here to die in the desert. You should have left us to die in Egypt. There was plenty of space in Egypt to bury all of us in proper graves. Did you get us out here because you thought that there was not enough room for our graves in Egypt? Why have you done this to us?

This is what we warned you about when we were in Egypt. We told you to leave us alone and let us serve the Egyptians because it would be better for us to serve the Egyptians as slaves than to die in the desert. We told you that. But now look what you've done!

14:13-14 MOSES SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE

The way Moses spoke to the angry, panicking people was marvellous. He spoke like a truly great leader. He just said: Don't be scared. Don't panic! Don't give up. Just stay where you are. You are going to witness the Lord's salvation. He is going to save you. You will see what the Lord will do for you today, because those Egyptians whom you can now see, you will never see again.

The Lord will fight the Egyptian army for you, and you must just keep your nerve and stay where you are. So don't do anything.

14:15-18 GOD TELLS MOSES WHAT TO DO

Moses was able to speak to the people like this despite their panic and rudeness because of what God had explained to him. God had said to Moses: There is no need for you to tell me what the people have been saying to you. Tell the Israelites to get ready to move again. I shall tell you what you must do, and what I am going to do.

What you must do is pick up your special staff once more. Then stretch your arm out towards the sea and divide the waters. That will allow the Israelites to go through the

sea on dry land.

What I am going to do is to work on the way the Egyptians think. I am going to let them suppose that they can chase after you people. I shall encourage them to do that.

In this way the Egyptians are going to learn that I am the Lord, the true God. They will respect me greatly when they find out what happens to Pharaoh and to his chariot army and to his horsemen.

14:19-20 THE ANGEL OF GOD MOVES THE CLOUD

Suddenly the angel of God, who had been leading the huge crowd of Israelites, moved away from the front of the people. He went behind them, and he took the pillar of cloud from the front so that it stood at the back of them.

The cloud came between the powerful army of Egypt and the helpless camp of Israel. And because of the cloud it was so dark on the Egyptian side that no one in the army could see anything. They could not move. They just had to stay where they were. But on the Israelite side the cloud caused light to shine through the night, and the people were encouraged. The result of the cloud moving like this was that there was no contact at all between the two sides for the whole night. The angel of God kept them apart.

14:21-22 THE ISRAELITES WALK THROUGH THE SEA

Then Moses raised his arm out towards the sea. When he did that the Lord pushed back the sea. He used a strong wind that blew from the hot, dry desert in the east to do this. The wind blew the whole night, and turned the sea into an empty beach, a completely dry sea-bed. The waters of the sea were split in two with the empty sea-bed between them.

The Israelites simply went forward, right through the middle of the sea, across the dry sand. On either side of them there was a wall of water, like a giant wave - but it was a wave that just stood still and held the sea back behind it, like a dam wall. These waves kept the sea at bay for the Israelites while they crossed over. There was one huge wave on their right, and another huge wave on their left.

14:23-25 THE EGYPTIAN ARMY GETS INTO TROUBLE

Ignoring the walls of water on either side, the Egyptians chased recklessly after the Israelites. All Pharaoh's horses and his chariots and horsemen galloped right into the middle of the sea across the dry sea-bed.

God, of course, had a bird's eye view of what was going on. Early in the morning, before it was light, God targeted the Egyptian army. God looked down at them from the pillar

of fire and the cloud. Using the cloud, God threw the army into chaos.

The wheels of the chariots turned the wrong way. They wobbled so much that it was difficult for the charioteers to drive their chariots. The Egyptians shouted: Let's get right away from the Israelites because the Lord is fighting for them against us!

14:26-28 THE WHOLE EGYPTIAN ARMY IS DROWNED

The Lord now gave Moses this instruction: Stretch your hand out towards the sea so that the waters will return and flood over the Egyptians and over their chariots and over their horsemen.

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea flooded back to its original place just as the morning began. The Egyptians were unable to get away from the huge flood racing toward them. They could only flee right into the way of the disaster rushing to drown them.

This was how the Lord shook off the Egyptians into the sea. The waters surged back and covered the chariot force and the horsemen and all the army of Pharaoh. The Egyptians who were coming after the Israelites ended up drowned in the sea. Not a single soldier survived.

14:29-31 THE ISRAELITES WATCHED WHAT GOD DID

The Israelites walked on dry land right through the sea. On either side of them, to their right and to their left there was a wall of water, like a dam, protecting them from the sea.

On that day the Lord saved Israel from the power of the angry Egyptians, and gave them a marvellous victory over their former masters who had treated them so cruelly. The whole of Israel saw the bodies of the dead Egyptians floating on the water near the sea shore. This was proof that they were now a free nation.

The nation of Israel witnessed the magnificent power that the Lord applied against the Egyptian's terrifying army. Because of what they saw the Lord do the Israelites were in awe of the Lord and gained complete confidence in him. They also respected and trusted Moses, the leader that the Lord had given them.

15:1-5 A SONG OF VICTORY FOR GOD

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord. It was a song of victory and praise to God who had done this wonderful, glorious thing for them. This is what they said - It went something like this:

I'll sing a song of thanks and praise to the Lord.

He is magnificent and highly, highly respected!

He ambushed the horses and their riders in the sea.

The Lord gives me support and confidence, and something to sing about.

This Lord of mine has achieved for me a stunning victory. So I shall praise him.

He is the God of my ancestors, and I shall honour him.

The Lord is a true soldier and a great general.

The Lord has a marvellous reputation. He deserves to be honoured.

He got rid of Pharaoh's chariots and his powerful army by trapping them in the sea.

The best of their soldiers, and even their extra soldiers, all drowned in the Red Sea.

The whole lot perished! They were all destroyed!

The roaring, surging waves overwhelmed them.

They sank right to the bottom of the deep sea like a rock.

15:6-8 THE MIRACLE OF THE RED SEA

Lord, your strength is amazing. It is glorious and majestic.

With your power, Lord, you utterly shattered the enemy.

With the greatness of your splendid majesty you overthrew and ruined those who rose up to challenge you.

You got very angry, and your anger destroyed them as fire destroys straw.

You blew with your mouth on the sea, and a strong wind piled the waters up into a great heap.

Instead of the flowing tide, the waters stood still, as if they had turned into a massive wall of ice.

All the waves and that vast amount of water thickened like snow, right in the heart of the sea.

It was an amazing miracle!

15:9-12 GOD DESTROYED THE ENEMY

The enemy thought: I shall chase them and catch them.

I shall conquer them and have a good time looting them.

I'm going to take revenge on them.

This is a good chance to attack them and get back control over them and make them suffer for what they have done to us.

But you, Lord, just blew with your breath and that produced a great wind.

It caused the sea to flood and overwhelm them.

They sank under the sea like a lump of lead falling into water.

They were gone, dead and buried, swept away under the powerful and awesome avalanche of water.

There are no other gods who can compare with you, Lord.

You alone are majestic and holy.

You are awesome and splendid and famous, and you do such marvellous things.

You used your power to save us, and so the earth simply swallowed up the Egyptian army.

15:13-18 GOD WILL GET US TO OUR HOME

You love us, Lord. You love your people, and you are very kind to us.

You have saved us. You reclaimed us and recovered us.

You got us out of that mess and all that suffering, and now you will lead us.

You took us out of slavery, and you have set us free.

We now know that you will use your awesome power to take us to our new home, a good and holy place where we can worship you.

That's where we shall at last be able to rest and be at peace.

The nations will hear what you have done for us.

They are going to be extremely worried and very scared.

Great nervousness will grip the Philistines (fil-is-tighns) when we march toward their country.

Then other countries will also be upset:

The chiefs of the people of Edom (ee-dim) will panic, and the rulers of the people of Moab (moh-ab OR in Hebrew, maw-av) will be gripped by uncontrollable trembling.

All the people living in Canaan (kay-nin), the land that God has promised to give to us, will despair.

They will become hopelessly disorganised and just give up when they hear what God has done for us.

When we get there these people will become frightened.

They will be so overawed and scared that they will become timid and not dare to oppose us.

Because of your power, Lord, they will be terrified.

They will not be able to think.

They will not know what to do.

They will remain frozen stiff with helplessness until your people, Lord, have gone past them.

They will not be able to make a move until the people that you set free, Lord, have passed by.

We belong to you, so you will be on our side, and our enemies will be helpless.

You are going to get your people to the Promised Land.

You will settle them safely and permanently, to live in the good land you, Lord, want to give them.

That is where you will set up your holy religion for us, Lord.

You will set it up safe and sound by your power.

There, in the Promised Land, the Lord will rule forever and ever.

15:19-21 THE WOMEN CELEBRATE THE VICTORY

Then Pharaoh's horse, with his chariot, galloped across the sea-bed, together with his horsemen. When they were on their way across, the Lord brought the waters of the sea back over them. But the Israelites had walked on dry land right through the sea.

Miriam, who was the sister of Aaron the High Priest, was herself a prophetess. When the

Israelites saw what had happened to their enemies, Miriam took out her tambourine (tam-baw-reen) to make music and to dance and sing. All the women joined in with her, with tambourines and with dances, to celebrate this amazing victory and to praise God who had destroyed the powerful and dreadful Egyptian army.

Miriam sang for them this chorus: He's the greatest!

Sing to the Lord, for he is terrific, magnificent, superb!

He ambushed the horse and its rider right in the middle of the sea.

15:22-25a THE PROBLEM OF NO WATER

Then Moses took the people of Israel away from the Red Sea, and they went towards the desert. They walked for three days in the desert and then found that there was no water to be had.

They moved on and came to a place called Marah (mah-rah) where there was water, but the water there at Marah was too salty to drink. It tasted bitter. That is why they called the place Marah, because Marah means "bitter."

So the people complained about the lack of water to drink. They criticised Moses. They said: Thanks to you, we've got no water. You got us into this desperate and horrible mess.

Moses turned to the Lord and prayed. He begged God for help. In answer to his prayer the Lord pointed out to Moses a certain type of tree. God explained to Moses that he must take a branch from it and fling it into the water. As a result the water became nice to drink.

15:25b-27 WHAT GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO DO

At the place they called Marah, which means bitterness, God made a rule and a law for his people. That was where God decided to test them. Would his people trust him and obey him, or would they not?

God said to them: It is most important that you listen to what the Lord your God says. You must do what God says is right. You must pay attention to what God decides. You have to keep all his rules. If you do this, if you do as I tell you, then I shall not make any of the plagues and diseases that happened to the Egyptians, come upon you.

Then the nation came to a place called Elim (ee-lim OR in Hebrew, eh-lim). Elim means the place of trees. There were twelve springs of water there, and seventy palm trees. They camped there by the water. It was a relief to be there after the harsh, dry desert.



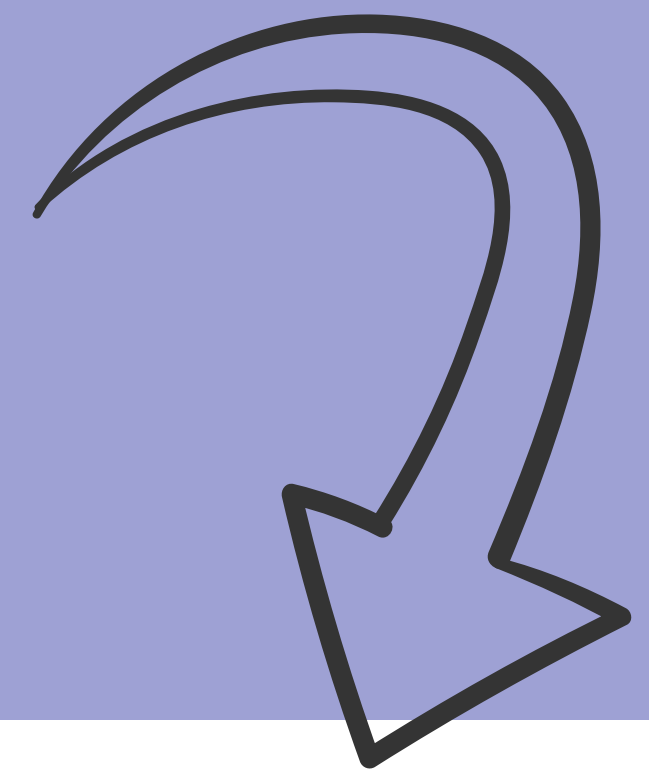
Now you can read Exodus 11-15 in your own Bible.

Exodus 11-15

Passage background & introduction



Read this part to get to know the background of the chapters you read in section 01.



The book of EXODUS is the second book in the Bible. It follows on after the end of the book of Genesis. The word Exodus (ex-a-dis) means exit or departure. The nation of Israel lived for 430 years in Egypt before they miraculously departed under Moses' leadership.

In Genesis God made two promises to Abraham, to Isaac his son, and to Jacob, Isaac's son:

- God's first promise was that their descendents would become a great nation.
- God's second promise was to give them the land of Palestine as their permanent home.

God also told them that their descendents would become slaves in another country, but that God would rescue them and bring them to the Promised Land. The land where they would be slaves was to be Egypt (ee-jipt). The book of Exodus is how God got his people out of Egypt after over 400 years, and out of slavery. The Exodus means 'The Great Escape.'

God's promise to Abraham came true about 600 years later. Jacob was Abraham's grandson. His name was changed to Israel by God. God also promised him what he had promised his grandad Abraham, and that promise to Israel came true about 400 years later.

God got the people of Israel, his chosen people, out of Egypt and out of slavery about 400 years before the time of King David and King Solomon. King David lived in 1000

BC, 1000 years before Jesus Christ. Solomon was David's son.

The Lord God had told Moses to go and get the Israelites out of Egypt. The Israelites lived in a great valley called Goshen (goh-shin). The Goshen valley is about 50 miles North East of Cairo. At the far end of the valley is a lake that now forms part of the Suez Canal.

The Israelites had been slaves in the valley of Goshen for many, many years. In recent times things had got worse. Moses, who was born in Egypt, had been saved from being killed by the Egyptians when he was born. The Egyptians were making life harder and harder for the Israelites. The Israelites became desperate and turned to God for help.

**When you get desperate, do the same thing:
turn to God for help.**

When Moses was eighty years old, God told him what to do. He went to the king of Egypt, called Pharaoh (fair-roh), and told him that God wanted the Israelites to leave Egypt so that they could worship him. Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses. So God sent a lot of trouble into Egypt. But however many plagues God sent, and however much damage they did, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go.

Even while the Egyptian people got more and more scared of God, Pharaoh became more and more stubborn. He would not listen. He refused to obey God. Finally God said, "That's enough! If he will not listen, I shall make him listen. If he will not do as I say, I shall force him to change his mind.

**There is no way that any man can argue with God,
no matter who he is or how powerful he may be.**

One important part of the story of the exodus is the Passover Feast that took place the night before the Israelites left Egypt. God told Moses to get the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb in every home, and have a celebration dinner. It was to celebrate the fact that they would now be free, after so many years of slavery. They were to smear some of the blood of the lamb on their door frames. This would be a sign that they were God's people. That night God would send an angel to kill all the first-born in every family in all of Egypt. When the angel saw the blood on the door he would pass over that family and leave it alone. Moses also told the Israelites that from then on the Passover was to be celebrated every year on the anniversary of the exodus.

Another order that Moses gave the Israelites was that they were to make bread for the journey. But on this evening they were to make the bread without any yeast. This was because there would be no time for the yeast to work in the dough. They would leave Egypt too quickly for that. So whenever the Passover Feast was to be held each year, the Israelites were to make bread without any yeast.

THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER AND THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The feast of Unleavened Bread is another name for the feast of the Passover. The **Passover** explains how God saved his people from slavery in Egypt. **Unleavened Bread** emphasises how God got his people to do exactly what he told them to. That is what the Israelites did on the night they came out of Egypt. They did just as God instructed them. The feast of the night of the Passover became the seven days of the feast of Unleavened Bread.

At the end of his life the Lord Jesus celebrated the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. On the night of the feast Jesus gave us Holy Communion. This was just before he left the world, in other words, just before his great Exodus. The Lord turned the Feast of the Passover into Holy Communion for us. The purpose of Holy Communion is for us to remember that Jesus died to take away our sins, so that we can live the way God has told us to. Communion is also to remember that Jesus rose from the dead in order to give us eternal life. Holy Communion is to remind us that Jesus Christ is coming back again from heaven to take us to heaven to live with him there forever. Christian communion is to bond us together with love.

This is what we believe and hope for, and it is the core or heart of our Christian faith. We must never forget it. We must never give up this hope. Meeting together to remember our Lord is to encourage us to be faithful to him. Having communion together is to strengthen our faith in God and also our love for one another. To celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death is to draw us together as a family of believers in a world that does not want God, and does not like his people.

When the Passover feast was prepared, the Israelites were to take care not to break any of the bones of the lamb that was sacrificed. This served two purposes:

- It was a sign that none of God's promises would ever be broken.
- It was also a prophecy that none of the Messiah's bones would be broken.

The Messiah would die to cancel out and wipe out our sins, but he would not die as a broken man. Death did not defeat Jesus; Jesus defeated death by dying and then rising again to life "the day after tomorrow," as he said he would.

When Jesus was crucified, none of his bones were broken. The two thieves who were crucified with him both had their leg-bones broken. By Jewish law the bodies had to be taken down from the crosses and buried before sunset, which was the Sabbath. In this case it was the special holy Sabbath of the Passover. If the men on the crosses were still alive, the bones of their legs had to be broken so that they could quickly die. Without their legs to lift them up a bit they could not breathe. However, the soldiers

decided not to break Jesus' legs because they found that he had already died. This was a sign to all God's people that God's purposes and promises were not broken even when evil people killed Jesus.

Listen to what is written in Exodus chapter 12 verse 46:

You must not break any bone of the lamb.

And listen to what is written in John's gospel, chapter 19 verse 33:

When the soldiers saw that Jesus was already dead, they did not break his legs.

The feast of Unleavened Bread shows us that God's rules are clear and strict.

The reason for this is that God wants his people to be faithful to him. The sign of faithfulness and loyalty to Jesus and to God is to obey God's commandments, as Jesus taught us to do.

If we listen to God we shall benefit greatly.

If we don't listen to God we shall lose out badly.

To be faithful to God, his people must keep doing two things:

- **First**, believers must remember how good God has been to them.
- **Secondly**, they must be careful to do exactly what God says. They must obey him.

People who love God will do this. They will want to do it. They will be glad and proud that they had done this at the end of their lives. They will be relieved and grateful that they had done this when they appear before God on Judgement Day. God rewards those who obey him. The feast of the Passover was to encourage God's people to be loyal to him.

The big thing that God did was that he got them out, all of them, against very, very strong opposition. God got so many of them out! He got the whole nation out, with all their families and all their animals. God also got them all out so quickly! And God got them all out successfully!

The **exodus** is the greatest miracle in the Old Testament.

The greatest miracle in the New Testament is the **resurrection** of Jesus from the dead.

The greatest miracle of them all is yet to come. It will be **when Jesus Christ returns** from heaven and raises all the dead people who have ever lived, and gets all God's people safely into heaven forever. He will judge every single person and get rid of all wicked people. This is going to be the most awesome miracle of all to watch and experience.

Once we believe in the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea, we can believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Once we believe that Jesus was raised, we can believe that we are also going to be raised from the dead, and live forever.

God sent Moses, his Minister, and Aaron whom he had chosen as High Priest, and they did wonderful deeds among God's people.

They performed miracles in Egypt, the land of North Africa. (Psalm 105)

The story of the Exodus is a very important part of the Bible. It is as important to the Old Testament as the resurrection of Jesus Christ is to the New Testament. In the New Testament Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gets all the people in the whole world out of the slavery of sin and out of the terrible grip that death has on us all - if we believe in him.

The Exodus is a kind of warm-up and practice session to get the world ready for the greater escape that Jesus Christ has achieved for us. The great escape from sin and from death and from punishment in hell after death is partly explained for us by the Exodus. This helps us to understand better what the death and resurrection of Jesus has done for us. It is clearly and wonderfully explained in this amazing story of the exodus from Egypt.

REMEMBER THE EXODUS and REMEMBER THE PASSOVER

The Passover Feast was a celebration every year to remember the Exodus.

The two important things about the Passover feast are:

First, the lamb and its blood, and

secondly, that the dinner was to be eaten quickly so that the people were ready to leave Egypt without any delay or any kind of hold-up.

In the New Testament, over a thousand years later, Jesus became the Lamb of God. God sent him to get us out of sin, and to make us God's people forever.

Everyone who listens to Jesus Christ and puts their trust in him will escape from death and go to heaven.

What God wants us to do is to show that we believe in Jesus, his Son. We must live as though we are ready at any time to leave this hard life and this nasty world, to go to a better world that God has promised us.

The Passover reminds us that if we believe that Jesus died to take away our sins and trust him to make us better people, God will not punish us when he punishes the world in the end.

The Exodus and the Passover warn us that at the end of the world God is going to punish all the nations who were against him.

WHAT THE PASSOVER MEANS TO US

Christians do not celebrate the Passover the way the Israelites and Jews used to do in the Old Testament. This is because the Lord Jesus Christ converted the Passover into what we call Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper.

But we still learn about God from the ancient Passover. That Passover was meant to teach Christians something about Communion, just as it was meant to teach the Jews about God.

The Passover means that God is going to act in history. One day all his biggest promises about the end of the world are going to come true. It will happen on a certain day just as the exodus from Egypt happened on a certain day. It will happen suddenly, and it will happen very quickly. God is going to punish the whole world, just as he punished the whole country of Egypt. No one will be able to stop him, just as Pharaoh and the Egyptian leaders and the Egyptian army and the Egyptian people were not able to stop God killing all the firstborn of the people and of their animals. God is suddenly going to save his people, and get them out of this wicked world. This is really going to happen. It is as certain as what happened at the Exodus.

What will save God's people is just one thing: it is the sacrifice of God's Lamb. That lamb is God's own Son. The blood is the sign of his sacrifice. Those who believe that he died for us will be spared when God punishes and destroys the world. But all his people, who believe in his Son's terrible sacrifice, and his astonishing resurrection from the dead, will be spared. That is God's gospel truth.

Exodus 11-15

A Bible study on our passage



Now let's grasp the points of each paragraph and the issues being spoken about, and together we can grow in our knowledge and love of God.



11:1-3 THE ISRAELITES GET READY TO LEAVE EGYPT

The Lord said to Moses: I am going to bring just one more disaster on ¹Pharaoh and Egypt. After that he will let you leave Egypt. In fact, he is going to chase you right out of the country. You can be quite sure of that!

So go and tell this news to the people. Since you will now be leaving, every man should ask any local Egyptian for a good-bye gift, and every woman should ask any Egyptian lady for jewellery of silver and gold.

This was possible because ²the Lord had caused the whole country of Egypt to have a lot of respect for the Israelites. All the Egyptians had tremendous respect for ³Moses. He was highly regarded not only by Pharaoh's government officials, but by all the people of the country.

¹Pharaoh: The word “Pharaoh” (fair-roh) originally meant “the palace” in which the ruler of Egypt lived. Later on they called the ruler, “The Palace” or “Pharaoh.” So Pharaoh means the leader or chief who lives in the great palace. The experts have still not discovered exactly who this Pharaoh was. We do not yet know his name, even though experts or archaeologists (arkee-ol-ajists), searching the pyramids (pir-a-mids) or digging up old ruins, have discovered the names and dates of many of those ancient Pharaohs. Archaeologists have also not been able to learn the exact date of the exodus. All we have is the rough times given to us in the Bible:

One reason why we do not know this information is because the exodus of the Israelites was a great defeat for Pharaoh and the Egyptians. People do not like to

talk or write about the times they lose, the way they like to boast about the times they win. The exodus was a bit over 400 years after Jacob and, very roughly, about 400 years before David. We know that King David was 1000 years before Jesus Christ.

²The Lord had caused the whole country of Egypt to have a lot of respect for the Israelites. In the previous nine disasters or plagues that God had brought upon the land of Egypt, something disastrous had happened even though Pharaoh had refused to let the Israelites go. The people of Egypt had been deeply affected by all those plagues that had done so much damage to their country, and so much harm to all of them. Even Pharaoh's officials and servants had become very worried. For years they had used the Israelites as slaves and in many cases had treated them badly and harshly. They were even allowed to kill them. But now, as a result of these many plagues all they wanted was to get the Israelites to leave Egypt. They were willing to encourage them to go in any way they could, to get rid of them. They even hoped that by being generous to the Israelites God would stop punishing them.

But they could not do anything because Pharaoh was in charge. While his people had got scared of God and had come to respect Moses very highly, Pharaoh had reacted quite differently. All these disasters had just made him angry, frustrated and resentful. Being punished made him furious. It was horribly humiliating for him, and he could not take it.

Pharaoh's officials were worried about what God was doing to the land and its people. But Pharaoh did not have to listen to any of them. He was the boss, and all of them had to listen to him. Pharaoh had become a proud and arrogant man. No one could tell him what to do. He had got more and more annoyed as God's grip tightened on his country. Pharaoh's attitude hardened. He got into an extremely bad mood, and became utterly stubborn. He absolutely refused to back down and lose face. He no longer cared what happened nor how his people suffered.

The only thing Pharaoh now wanted was to refuse Moses permission to take the Israelites out of Egypt. He had made up his mind. This influenced many of his leaders, who were scared of him, so that they also did not want the Israelites to leave the country. The result was that they were in two minds: because of God and Moses they WANTED the Israelites to leave, but because of Pharaoh they did NOT want the Israelites to leave.

³Moses: Moses was 80 years old at the time of the exodus.

11:4-8 GOD TELLS MOSES WHAT WILL HAPPEN

Then Moses announced to the Israelites: This is what the Lord said: At about midnight I am going out myself, right through the land of Egypt.

Then every ¹first-born in the land of Egypt will die. Every single one! From the first-born of Pharaoh, the ruler of the whole country, to the first-born of any slave-girl working with her ²millstone, each and every one will die. Even the first-born of all the ³cattle will die.

This will result in a dreadful, horrible cry of fear and grief right throughout the whole country of Egypt. It will be worse than anything that has ever happened in the past, and nothing as terrible as this will ever happen again.

But among all the Israelites there will be absolute peace and quiet. Not even a dog will disturb the silence by barking at anyone or anything. This is how you will know that the Lord will treat the Egyptians and the Israelites completely differently.

Moses said to Pharaoh: I warn you that this is what God has told me he is going to do. He also told me that all these officials of yours will come to plead with me. They will bow down to me and beg me: Please go! You and all the people who accept your leadership, go! After that I shall leave. I shall leave for good! Moses turned away from Pharaoh and left. He was furious with Pharaoh.

¹First-born: This means the eldest son in every family, the child who was born first. The first-born child, if a boy, was the most important and most highly prized possession anyone ever had in their home. The first-born would usually be the future leader in that family. Only God had the power to kill every firstborn son in the country in one night, and so force Pharaoh to give in.

²Millstone: In those days they used to grind corn into flour by rubbing it between two specially made stones. This grinding was hard work as well as boring work, so it was done by a slave-girl, who spent a long time grinding the corn into flour to make bread.

³Cattle: Their cattle, their cows and bulls and oxen, were very important to people in those days. People prized them highly, and looked after them carefully. To lose all the cattle's first-born would be a huge loss, both in terms of their wealth and their pride.

11:9-10 GOD SAYS PHARAOH WILL NOT LISTEN

The Lord told Moses: Pharaoh won't listen to you. That is why I have to do so many amazing things in Egypt.

So Moses and Aaron did all these amazing things for Pharaoh to see. But Pharaoh just became intensely angry and stubborn. He utterly refused to let the Israelites leave the country.

Chapter 12

This chapter tells us about the special feast and celebration that God wanted the Israelites to enjoy. God was going to give them their freedom and he wanted them to remember this wonderful exodus every year. Here God tells Moses how the people are to celebrate this great event each year.

The Passover feast was to focus on the lamb that was sacrificed to save each Israelite family.

12:1-4 THE FEAST IN THE FIRST MONTH

God said to Moses and Aaron, when they were in Egypt:

This month, when you leave Egypt, is to be ¹the first month of each year for you in future.

You must tell the whole nation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month, every year, they are to do something special. Each family must get a lamb. They are to have a feast to remember and celebrate what God is now going to do for you here in Egypt.

If the family is too small to eat a whole lamb by themselves, then they must join up with their nearest neighbour's family. You must work out how many people are needed to get together to eat a whole lamb.

¹The first month of each year: This month was called **Aviv** (ah-veev). It was at the same time as late March and early April. So Christians celebrate Easter at roughly the same time that Jews or Israelis celebrate the Passover.

The capital of modern Israel is Tel Aviv. Tel means a hill. Tel Aviv actually means a huge pile of grain, which meant a very successful harvest.

12:5-11 HOW TO CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER

God said to Moses and Aaron: Make sure that there is ¹nothing at all wrong with the lamb. ²The lamb you pick from the flock must be a male and one year old. You may take either a lamb from the flock or, if you do not have one, a kid from the goats.

It must be in your care until the fourteenth day of this month. Then the whole nation of Israel must slaughter it at the same time, in the evening.

They must take some of its ³blood and make a mark with it on the two posts on either side of their front door. They must also put some blood on the frame above the door. Every home where they eat the lamb must do this.

Then they must eat the meat that night. The meat must be roasted in the fire. They must also eat ⁴bread made without yeast, and with it ⁵herbs that are bitter to taste.

Do not eat the meat raw. The meat must be properly cooked, but do not boil it. It must not be cooked in water. The meat has to be roasted over the fire. Roast the whole lamb, its head, its legs and its insides. It is a lamb, not just a piece of meat!

Do not leave any of it uneaten until morning. If any of it is left over until morning it must be completely burnt up in the fire. There must be no scraps left from the lamb. Burn completely anything that is left over. Nothing must be wasted or thrown away or left to go bad.

When you sit down to eat your Passover dinner you must do the following: Do not dress smartly with your clothes hanging right down to the ground. Tuck them up under your belt as you would do if you were going out to work. Make sure you are wearing your walking shoes. You must also have the staff you carry around outside right there next to you. Eat your dinner as if you are ready to go straightaway on a long journey. You must have the dinner as if you are about to leave home.

This dinner is very special. It is the Passover for the Lord. The people who celebrate the Passover like this are the Lord's people. If they obey these instructions and orders, then the Lord is their God.

¹Nothing at all wrong with the lamb: The lamb must not be sick or hurt or lame or odd in any way. It must be healthy and normal.

²The lamb: The basic idea of the Passover was that the lamb would die instead of the first-born in the family.

³Blood: There were reasons why the Israelites smeared blood on their doorposts. This is difficult to explain because things were so different in those days. What we are reading about happened over three thousand years ago.

First, they were doing exactly what God told them to do. God would not punish anyone who obeyed him. He would punish those who did NOT obey him.

Secondly, in those days blood was the usual way that most people worshiped. Even the nations who worshiped other gods used blood. Blood was the sign of loyalty. The blood of an animal was shed when it was slaughtered for a meal. A meal was also the sign of loyalty to one another, and together, to God. People did not have fridges in those days that could keep meat fresh, so they had to keep the animal alive until they were ready to eat it. They killed it by cutting its throat and draining its blood away.

They poured some of the blood on the altar or the ground. Then they cooked the slaughtered animal and had a meal together. The idea was that when they asked their God for a favour, they sacrificed an animal to him. This was their way of showing that they believed in their God and were loyal to him.

It was rather like the way we invite people for a meal. This shows that we are friendly towards the people we invite. Having a meal of lamb together in the name of the Lord showed that people were faithful to God. But if people had a meal in the name of an idol, it showed that they did not want to obey the true God.

Thirdly, to get any favour from God one had to be acceptable to God. The only way to be acceptable was to be clean in one's soul. One must have a conscience that is clean. To get a clear conscience one had to say sorry to God for whatever one had done that was bad. One had to get God's forgiveness. The way to get this forgiveness was to offer to God the sacrifice of an animal. As the animal died, its blood was the means by which its owner got cleansing from God. The sacrifice purified the believer who offered it. He now became forgiven and acceptable to God.

In the exodus, the blood on the doorframe showed that this sacrifice had been done the way God wanted it done.

⁴Bread made without yeast: When people make bread, they put a small lump of yeast into the raw dough and leave it to stand. Slowly the yeast spreads right through all the dough and causes the bread to fill with air and rise into a loaf. If

there is no yeast in the dough then it remains flat, even when it is baked, like a biscuit or a pizza.

God insisted that no one must put any yeast into their bread. They must make flat bread. This was called unleavened bread. Leaven means that yeast causes the bread to rise.

⁵Herbs that are bitter: One kind of herb used here was the Egyptian wild lettuce.

The herb was to taste bitter to remind the Israelites of their past. As they celebrated the freedom that God gave them, they were to remember that they had once been slaves.

Another bitter herb that the Israelites could use at the Passover dinner was chicory. We use some chicory to help give coffee its taste.

12:12-13 GOD WILL ATTACK EGYPT'S FIRST-BORN

God said: I am going to invade the land of Egypt myself. I am going to go out right through the whole country tonight, and I shall kill every single firstborn in Egypt. I shall kill not only the people, but also the firstborn of the animals. That will strike a big blow against all ¹the gods of Egypt. People will have to learn that I am the only true God.

But the blood that you put on the doors of your homes where you live will be a sign that will save you from death. When I see that blood, I shall leave you alone. I shall pass over your house, and no harm will come to you. You will not get hurt at all when I hit the land of Egypt. I am going to hit them hard.

¹The gods of Egypt: The Egyptians were very clever people. Among the ancient nations they were highly civilized. Their amazing pyramids prove this. The pyramids are among the greatest buildings ever made by man. One of their pyramids was made of huge blocks of stone whose total weight was over five million tons. It was built with incredible accuracy.

But where religion was concerned, they usually worshiped a whole lot of gods.

They copied their gods from nature. Their favourite God was the sun. They also had gods that looked like animals. Snakes, like the Egyptian cobra, were popular. They had gods that were a mixture of animal and human. The god might have an animal's head and a human body, or a human head with an animal's body. Some gods looked like weird animals that they just made up.

When God killed the first-born of all the animals, it showed everyone, very clearly, that animal-gods were not real gods at all. None of these Egyptian gods could stand up against the God of Moses. None of those gods could protect their people and their animals against the God of the Israelites. The Egyptian gods were all useless and worthless.

The word, “God” means someone you can turn to for help and protection. You can also turn to him to find true happiness, and eternal life after death.

The word “god” means whatever people make up in their imagination. They do this in order to have a lucky charm, or something or someone to turn to for help and protection. They hope that it can produce for them some happiness and maybe some sort of life after death.

But the big problem with these gods is that they are just made up. People make them up and then teach them to their children. The children grow up thinking that these gods are true, so they also teach this to their children. Eventually everybody believes in their gods.

12:14-16 REMEMBER TO CELEBRATE THIS DAY

God said: This is a day you must always remember. Remember to thank God and enjoy him. Worship him and then stay loyal to him, generation after generation. This is something you must always do as a nation.

For seven days you must eat bread without any yeast in it. In fact, on the first day of the feast you must see to it that there is no yeast whatsoever anywhere in your home. Get rid of it altogether. If anyone does eat¹ anything leavened, anything with yeast in it, he may no longer be a member of the nation of Israel. He will lose his citizenship in this country. That rule applies from the beginning of the first day of the feast, until the end of the seventh day. Do this so that you can all show your loyalty to God.

On the first day hold a special assembly for all the people. On the seventh day hold another special, holy assembly. It is for God. That day is for you to honour him. No work whatsoever may be done on those seven days. The only thing anyone is allowed to do is to cook food to eat. That is all you may do.

¹Anything leavened: Leavened bread is made with yeast, which causes it to rise slowly, very slowly, into a loaf. The yeast ferments, causing tiny bubbles that make the bread dough expand. This usually took place during the night while they were asleep.

While this special or holy feast lasted God wanted them to eat flat bread without yeast. That is called unleavened bread.

When the Israelites left Egypt there was no time for them to make proper or normal bread that was leavened. God not only did something very powerful, but he also did it very quickly. When the sun set that evening, they were slaves. By the time the sun rose next morning, they were free.

When their descendants celebrated the Passover, God wanted them to remember how quickly he had set their people free when they were in Egypt. Originally, at the time of the exodus, the Passover feast was just for that one night. But afterwards, when the exodus was to be remembered by later generations, the feast was lengthened to seven days, and called The Feast of Unleavened Bread.

There was another reason for eating unleavened bread. At the beginning of the feast they all had to get rid of any yeast in their homes. They must make absolutely sure that they ate only bread without yeast during the whole of the feast that lasted a week. The idea behind this was to build up confidence in God. The more confidence they had in God, the more they would obey him and stay faithful to him. Getting rid of all yeast really meant getting rid of all doubts about God. This is because doubts about God always lead to disobeying God.

They must remind themselves that God got them out of Egypt in a most wonderful way. When God decides to act, nothing can stop him. He does not have to struggle to get things done. He solves problems when it suits him, and we can trust him to do that. Once he decides to act, it will be done. We can be sure it.

The whole feast was to remember God's almighty power. He not only got all his people out of Egypt, but he got them out quickly.

We are told in the New Testament that when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth at the end of the world, he will come quickly. His coming will be like lightning. He will have come before anyone can move.

12:17-20 GOD INSISTS ON BREAD WITHOUT YEAST

When God gave instructions for how the Passover was to be remembered in future, he said: Celebrate the Passover as the feast of Unleavened Bread, for it was on this very day that I brought your great nation from the land of Egypt. So celebrate this day year after year for future generations. It is a special occasion, and you must always keep it up.

In the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, you must eat unleavened bread. You must keep this up until the evening of the twenty-first day of the month.

For seven days you are not allowed to have any yeast in your homes. If anyone eats leavened bread that person may no longer belong to the family of Israel. This applies to everyone, whether it is someone who was born in the land as an Israelite, or someone who used to be a foreigner but chose to become an Israelite.

You must NOT eat any leavened bread in any of your homes. You may eat ¹only bread without yeast.

¹Only bread without yeast: The reason why this rule about yeast was so strict was that God wanted to teach his people a lesson. God used yeast as a picture of sin. When people believe in the true God, they must trust him, listen to him and stop sinning. They must get rid of all sin in their lives. So each year they got rid of all yeast for a week to remind them to get rid of all sin in their lives. God's people must be obedient and righteous. They must do what is right, and stop doing whatever is wrong or bad.

The reason why most people preferred to worship idols was because they then allowed themselves to do some things that were sinful and ugly. To idol worshippers some sins were OK. To God's people NO sin was alright or acceptable. Getting rid of all yeast for a week each year was a reminder that it was their duty to get rid of all sin in their lives.

12:21-23 GETTING READY TO AVOID DANGER

Moses got all the leaders of Israel together and explained to them 'what the people must do to keep the Passover: Fetch your sheep for your families and slaughter them for the Passover.

Then take ²a bunch of hyssop (hiss-sip) and dip it in the blood that is in a basin. Splash some of it on the doorframe, above the door and on both sides of the door. You must use the blood in the basin for this. Having done this it is most important that not a single one of you is allowed to go out of his home until morning.

So when the Lord comes along to attack the Egyptians, he will see the blood on top of the door and on the doorposts on both sides. Then the Lord will pass over that doorway and will not allow the angel doing the executing to go into that house to kill the first-born there.

¹What the people must do to keep the Passover: The people must obey God's instructions so that the angel of death did not come into their homes. They had to do the following:

- **They must sacrifice the lamb.**
- **They must mark their doorframes with its blood.**
- **They must eat unleavened bread.**
- **They must stay indoors for the night.**

²A bunch of hyssop (hiss-sip): Hyssop is a small plant or herb that grows in the Middle East. Actually, no one is quite certain exactly what that herb was. But it seems to have been like the mint herb that we use to give our mouth a clean, fresh feeling. We get peppermints from it. It has a pleasant, clean smell and taste. A bit of mint also makes food look nice.

The hyssop herb was used by the priests for spiritual cleansing or purification. It was used to declare someone clean before God, or clean in the community. To dip it in blood meant that the blood would purge or get rid of one's sins. One would get God's forgiveness and love. To God sin is something dirty. Blood and hyssop were used in a spiritual way to make people's soul and conscience clean. Blood and hyssop were the signs of God's forgiveness.

12:24-28 ALWAYS CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER

Now you must keep up doing what I have told you to do, and you must make it a rule for you and your descendents. It is something you must always do, year after year. When you come to the country that the Lord will give you, just as he promised, you must keep up this religious custom.

Your children may ask you, What does this custom mean to you?

Tell them: This is the Passover Sacrifice. It is done out of respect for the Lord. It is because he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he punished the Egyptians. The Lord spared our homes. We escaped that terrible punishment. The people knelt down and worshiped the Lord.

They then went off and did exactly what the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron to tell them. They did what God told them to do.

12:29-30 THE DEATHS OF THE FIRST-BORN

In the middle of the night, the Lord attacked Egypt. ¹The Lord himself killed every firstborn in the land. None escaped. The first-born of Pharaoh was killed, although Pharaoh was the king in charge of the country. Even the firstborn of a helpless prisoner shut up in a jail, died. God also killed all the firstborn of the animals.

Then Pharaoh got up in the night, along with all his officials, as well as all the people of Egypt. A terrible howl went up from the entire country of Egypt. There was not a home where there was not someone who was dead.

¹The Lord himself killed every firstborn: Many people find it a problem that the Lord himself killed all the firstborn of the Egyptians. Many of those firstborn would be children, either young people or babies. They would probably have died in their sleep.

The reason why they all died was because Pharaoh had been so stubborn. He would not listen to God. The Egyptians had made the Israelites slaves for many years, and had treated them harshly and cruelly. They had been killing all the new-born Israelite baby boys for years. God wanted to save the Israelites and take them to their own land. This annoyed Pharaoh, and he became more and more angry. Eventually he got so furious that he became extremely stubborn and utterly stupid. The Lord warned Pharaoh what would happen, but he ignored God. This was

the only way that God could get Pharaoh to let his people go. All God's previous attempts to try other forms of warning and punishment did not work.

Nowadays too, lots and lots of children are dying and suffering, just because adults or leaders are so foolish or wicked. Many children lose their lives because adults will not listen to God. When rulers are bad, many people and children and animals suffer and die.

But if any Egyptians did listen to God, they could also escape the same way that the Israelites did. They could either spend the night with an Israelite family, or slaughter a lamb and put some blood on their doors. We know, for instance, that when Moses warned Pharaoh that God was going to send heavy hail, the Egyptians who brought their servants and cattle out of the fields and into shelter, saved their lives. Where the owners ignored God and left their servants and their cattle in the fields, they all died.

A question that many people ask is this: Why does God allow suffering? One has to read the whole Bible to find an answer to that question. One probably has to read the Bible a few times to understand this mystery. What we learn here is that when people will not listen to God, they suffer. So do their children and their animals. When people listen to God, he looks after them, as well as their children and even their animals.

A special problem for Pharaoh and the Egyptians was that the heir to the throne, Pharaoh's firstborn, also died. This would have caused a great political problem for the Egyptians, especially when Pharaoh himself was killed some days later at the Red Sea.

12:31-32 PHAROAH GIVES IN TO MOSES

That night Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said: Alright, you can go! You may leave our country and my people. Yes, both you and the Israelites are free to leave. Go and worship the Lord, as you said.

You may also take your flock of sheep and your herd of cattle, just as you said. Now go! Just go! Get out, all of you! And 'please also say a prayer for me.

'please also say a prayer for me: The point here is that Pharaoh had now clearly come to see how powerful the Lord is. Even Pharaoh had to admit that he needed God's help.

But here we also have a problem: we have to learn a hard lesson from the Bible.

When people get into great trouble, they want someone religious to say a prayer for them. People also do that kind of thing when they want to succeed in something like an exam, or even to win an important game. But that did not help Pharaoh in any way whatsoever. In a few days he would be joining his son in death.

Pharaoh had shown very clearly that he did not want to listen to God. In a short while he was going to change his mind again and chase after the Israelites to force them to come back into slavery. God knew that when Pharaoh asked for a prayer he did not really mean it deep down in his heart. To ask for a prayer does not necessarily mean that you are going to get the answer you want from God. It all depends on what your attitude is. God will listen to people who need him, not to people who just want to use him.

12:33-36 THE ISRAELITES LEAVE THE EGYPTIANS

The Egyptians were now very keen to send the Israelites away from their country as soon as possible. The Egyptians were scared that they would all die if the Israelites remained in their land any longer.

The Israelites left so quickly that there was no time for them to make bread. They took the bread-dough before it was leavened, from the wooden pans, and simply wrapped it in their clothes and flung the bundle over their shoulders.

Then the people of Israel did something else that Moses told them to do. They went and asked the Egyptians for some valuable and useful things to take with them. They asked for things made of silver and gold, and for good quality clothing.

¹The Lord made the Egyptians keen to give them what they asked for. The Egyptians actually gave away most of their best belongings to the Israelites because they were so afraid of God. They did not want God to punish them anymore. When people are scared they will give anything away.

¹The Lord made the Egyptians keen to give them what they asked for: The Egyptians were willing to encourage the Israelites to go in any way they could, to get rid of them. They even hoped that by being generous to the Israelites God would stop punishing them.

12:37-39 THE ISRAELITES LEAVE EGYPT

At last the Israelites pulled out of Egypt. They left ¹Rameses (Ram-m'sees) and went off to ²Succoth (Soo-cot). The crowd that left Egypt was huge: there were six hundred thousand grown-up men who walked away from Egypt, not counting the children.

They were also accompanied by a lot of other people who joined them to leave Egypt. The Israelites took with them herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and other farm animals - lots and lots of them.

They baked the bread-dough that they took away with them from Egypt. They made flat cakes, like sandwiches. They used unleavened bread because there was no time to use any yeast. This was because they were sent away from Egypt so suddenly that they had to leave hurriedly, and there was no time to prepare food for the journey.

¹Rameses (Ram-m'sees): Before the Nile River flows into the Mediterranean Sea it splits up or branches out, into a number of rivers that spread out like the fingers of an open hand. They form a delta (del-ta) of rivers that run into the Mediterranean Sea. The most famous city on one of these delta rivers is Alexandria, which is towards the western side of the delta. The Israelites lived in an area called Goshen (gaw-shen), which was in the eastern area of the Delta. Rameses was a town about 30 miles from where the Suez Canal now begins at the Mediterranean Sea.

The Suez Canal was built the year before 1870. It had taken ten years to complete. The first six years were spent digging the massive trench all the way down to the Red Sea. The digging was done by labourers. They worked in the heat of the desert.

²Succoth (Soo-cot): Succoth was about 50 kilometres (30 miles) from Rameses, further to the east. It was near the Bitter Lakes, which today are part of the Suez Canal. The name Succoth means “tents”. So Succoth was a Tent City.

12:40-42 THE NIGHT OF THE EXODUS

The length of time that the Israelites stayed in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

At the end of four hundred and thirty years exactly, to the very day, all the different groups of Israelites left Egypt to serve the Lord. They left

like a well-organised army. In fact, the organisation of their departure was brilliant. There was no chaos or confusion as they went, despite their huge numbers.

That night, the Israelites held a vigil, that is, a night-watch. They kept watch through the hours of darkness. They were expecting God to do something great, and were excited. They used the time to pray. Their night-watch was for the Lord to get them out of the land of Egypt. That is why every year that night should be a vigil for all the Israelites to keep for the Lord. It is an anniversary for all future generations to keep and celebrate. The vigil that night was to be called the Passover.

12:43-47 RULES FOR THE PASSOVER

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: This is how you must keep the Passover when you get to the Promised Land. The celebration is a special privilege, so it is only for my people. The rule is that no outsider, no stranger or foreigner, is allowed to join in this feast.

On the other hand, ¹any slave who has been bought by an Israelite may join in the Passover feast and celebration. That slave may join the celebration as long as he or she is also ²a genuine Israelite.

But if someone is staying with you only for a while, or you have hired him to work for a fixed time, he is not allowed to join in the feast.

The meal must be eaten in just the one house where the lamb was slaughtered and roasted. Everyone must ³gather to eat it together. Do not take any of the meat outside the house. It is too precious to be wasted or thrown away. Every-one must eat it inside, together. You must ⁴never break any bone of the slaughtered lamb.

In future the whole nation of Israel must celebrate the Passover every year.

¹any slave who has been bought by an Israelite. In history there have been two kinds of slavery:

The first kind was usually where an army conquered other people and turned them into slaves. Being a slave meant that one had been defeated in battle. The normal punishment for being defeated was either to be killed or to be captured and taken into slavery. This was, of course, often very cruel.

There was another form that was also cruel, where rich people found that they could become even richer by using people as slaves. They did not have to pay slaves for their work. Those slaves were often treated brutally so that they could not rebel or run away. It was not until the 1800's, the 19th century, that that kind of slavery was officially banned. But unfortunately it has continued into modern times. It's a great struggle for nations to get rid of it, because there are so many greedy and cruel people.

Then there was another kind of slavery that was practiced under Moses' leadership. This was something rather like the modern idea of adopting a child into a family. Slaves were like servants, and so were regarded as valuable. Families were expected to treat their slaves well. Slaves could be bought in those days. People who bought them generally looked after them in the same way that we look after the things that we buy.

When people became poor, instead of suffering helplessly, they could sell themselves as slaves to someone who could provide a better life for them. They could then have decent food and clothing and accommodation, instead of starving and living in misery. Because the world is in such a mess there are many poor people. Because there are so many wars, and so much persecution, there are many refugees. It was the same in ancient times. In those days people could escape from poverty or persecution by offering to serve as slaves to people who were well off. Refugees would be willing to do anything for anyone who could help them survive and who would look after them and their children.

Slaves could, if they worked well, even become managers for their owners. The slave would then look after the owner's business so that the owner could concentrate on other things he was interested in. Some slaves became very wealthy and highly respected. If owners did not have a son to become their heir, their slave could become their heir. He could then take over all his master's property and wealth when the owner died.

Some slaves were so happy to work for a good and successful owner that they were allowed a special privilege by law. If they so wished they could legally dedicate the rest of their lives to serve and live with their owners. They would never again be poor and needy and worried.

Moses also had a law that every 50 years all slaves in Israel must be set free. They must also be given help, by their owners, to be able to live as free people in future. No one had to be a slave forever. No one would have to see his children forced to become slaves too.

This was to tell us that God does not want his people to be slaves, even if there are advantages for them. God wants his people to be free.

²A genuine Israelite: A true Israelite was any man or boy who had been circumcised. Being circumcised was a ceremony performed to make that person pure and clean in a religious way. It meant making him acceptable to God. This was done by a ceremony or ritual (a religious ceremony) known as circumcision (sir-kim-si-zhin.)

If an Israelite bought a slave he would put him through the ceremony of circumcision. This was because a slave in those days would become part of the family, like an adopted child. God wanted all his people to be clean, to be decent people and to live good lives. Circumcision was the decision by a family, or by anyone, to live a good, clean life for God. This is called morality. Circumcision means living a moral life because one believes in God.

³Gather to eat it together: When the exodus occurred, there was a wonderful spirit of togetherness or unity among all the people. The Passover feast, held each year, was to remember and copy or imitate this lovely spirit of oneness among the people of future generations. They must try to preserve this good, warm attitude towards one another, because of God's goodness and leadership.

It sounds strange, but it is actually very hard for God's people to live together and get on well. Christians have a very big struggle to love one another, just as many families do, or just as various people in a nation do.

The point of the Passover Feast each year was to remind believers that they must trust God, and that they must also be good to one another.

When Jesus celebrated the Passover just before he was arrested, he went out of his way to show his disciples that they must love one another. He spent a part of the Passover meal acting as a servant to all his disciples.

⁴Never break any bone: God had promised his people that he would take them to their own country, where they would be free. God's promises are never broken. God's promises are like strong bones in our lives, if we believe them and trust him. They give us the strength to face the problems and dangers in life.

Jesus was crucified just as the Passover Feast was beginning. He offered to be the lamb that was sacrificed to free the world from the slavery of sin and of death. One of the amazing details about his crucifixion is that none of his bones were broken.

The bones of the legs of the two thieves who were crucified with him were broken. The reason why their bones were broken was this: When people were crucified they hung from their wrists that were nailed to the cross. Hanging like that they could not breathe. So they would lift themselves up a bit with their legs to catch their breath. But their ankles were also nailed to the cross. The pain of taking the whole weight on their ankles would be too much, and they would have to bend their knees

to change their weight from their ankles back to their wrists. This extremely painful and panicky process would go on hour after hour until they lost consciousness from pain and tiredness. They would then soon die.

In this case the Sabbath was about to start on Friday evening. It was against Jewish law and the law of Moses to leave crucified bodies on the cross on the Sabbath. So the soldiers were told to make sure the three victims were dead so that their bodies could be removed before the sun set. The way to get them to die quickly was to break their legs by hitting them with something like a heavy piece of wood. They would then not be able to push themselves up to be able to breathe. The soldiers did this with the two thieves. But when they came to Jesus they found that he was already dead, so there was no point in breaking his bones. Instead, just to make a hundred percent sure, they stabbed him with a spear, which produced a lot more blood.

This order, never to break a bone of the sacrificial lamb, was a sign that Jesus would fit in with, or fulfil, the meaning of the Passover. Jesus fulfilled Scripture even when he was completely and utterly helpless. God made sure of that.

The fact that no bone must ever be broken during the Passover Feast was also a sign that believers in God and in Christ must see to it that our spirit is never broken. Our loyalty to the Lord, and our love to God, must never, never ever, break down. We might be crucified in some way like our Lord, but our faith in him must never be broken – just as his bones were never broken, not even when they crucified him.

12:48-51 WHAT ISRAEL MUST FOCUS ON

Here is a rule you must keep when you get to the Promised Land. There will be people who are not Israelites, living among you, such as people who do business with you, or people who want to live in your land. If any of them wants to join in the Passover, to remember what the Lord did for us, and to honour him, ¹ that person must be circumcised. This applies to any man or boy. Once he is circumcised, he is allowed to join in the Passover feast just as if he were ²born in the land of Israel. But if anyone is not circumcised, he may not eat at the Passover meal.

Once anyone living among you is circumcised, the Law of God will apply to him in exactly the same way that it applies to all Israelites who were born in the land of Israel.

All the people of Israel did just as the Lord told Moses and Aaron to do. They all did what they were told.

So on that famous day that followed the Passover, God brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. ³On that particular day, God got the whole nation out of slavery, and they left in good order.

¹that person must be circumcised: God wanted the nation of Israel to belong to him. They were the only nation in the world that would listen to God and obey him. God wanted his people to be holy. Holiness meant that they would be faithful to God. In this way they would be different from all other people or nations.

The sign that they were a godly nation, true to God, was that they were circumcised. If any people from other nations wanted to join the nation of Israel, they had to be circumcised. Circumcision meant that they would in future live clean, decent lives. They would be a moral people. They would not do anything immoral or bad. They would keep God's Ten Commandments and obey the Law of Moses.

Circumcision was a promise or commitment made by a person or family, to avoid idolatry and immorality and any kind of ungodliness or disobedience of God's laws. By this commitment they joined those who trusted and obeyed God. Once circumcised, they belonged to God's family for the rest of their lives.

²born in the land of Israel: Those who were born into the nation or country of Israel were called "native-born." Anyone not born in Israel was regarded as a foreigner. But any foreigner could become an Israelite as long as he decided to obey the Lord in all things. Foreigners could become God's people by becoming circumcised.

³On that particular day: That day was the Sabbath day. So the Passover night when the firstborn of the Egyptians died was the Hebrew Sabbath. The day the Israelites became free and started to leave Egypt was the Sabbath.

The important thing about this was that it happened after the Israelites had been 430 years in Egypt. This day was a very special and important day in their history:

- **One day they were in Egypt as slaves as they had always been.**
- **The next day they were free, and on their way out of Egypt.**

This is what it is going to be like when Jesus Christ returns from heaven. It will happen on a particular day in the history of our world. One day we shall be living as we have always done; the next day it will all have changed. Heaven will have come down into our world and the kingdom of Jesus Christ will take over from all

governments in the whole world. That will be the end, forever, of sin and trouble and death. It is going to happen on a particular day that God our Father decides.

Chapter 13

13:1-2 THE FIRST-BORN BELONG TO GOD

Again the Lord spoke to Moses. He said:

I want every first-born of every family to belong to me. They are special from now on, and must be dedicated to me. ¹They are to be made holy. Every boy that is born, who is his mother's first son, is mine from now on. This applies not only to the people, but also to the animals. Every first-born male belongs to me.

¹They are to be made holy: The first-born or eldest son, must in future belong to God, and therefore become holy. He would be offered or dedicated to God. This meant that the firstborn boy would become a leader in his family as he grew up, and he must set the example of obeying and worshiping God. It was also his responsibility to lead the rest of the family to obey and worship God. Consecrating or dedicating the firstborn to God was a big step towards getting the whole family to be faithful to God.

13:3-7 CELEBRATE THE EXODUS

Moses explained to the people that they were to remember to celebrate the exodus in future: You must remember, and celebrate, this day that you came out of Egypt. Don't forget that you were helpless slaves there, but the Lord used his tremendous power, and got you out of that horrible slavery. To celebrate or commemorate the exodus, you must see to it that no leavened bread is eaten.

Today you are leaving Egypt for good. You are getting out in this month of Aviv (ah-veev), [which was late March or early April, somewhere around Easter time.]

The land of Canaan that God promised to give to the Israelites was occupied by a number of different nations. There were ten of them, and they were powerful. Five of those nations are mentioned here. These were

ancient nations and few people know anything about them.

The Lord is going to get you safely into the land of ¹the Canaanites (kay-nin-nights) and even ²the Hittites (hit-ights) and ³the Amorites (am-aw-rights) and ⁴the Hivites (chi-vights, ch as in loch) and also ⁵the Jebusites (je-boo-sights, OR in Hebrew y'voo-see). As the Lord promised your ancestors, your forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he is going to give you a wonderful country where you will be able to enjoy life and have the good things you would like to have. Then in the land of Canaan you must remember to celebrate this Passover ceremony in this month of Aviv.

When you celebrate the Exodus in the Promised Land, you must eat bread without yeast for seven days. On the seventh day you must hold a special feast, a festival, to worship the Lord who has done this marvellous thing for our nation. That will be the sign that you appreciate what the Lord has done for you. He got you all out of Egypt against impossible odds, in super-quick time, and ⁶in brilliant good order.

So see to it that unleavened bread is eaten for seven days. There must be no sign of any leavened bread anywhere among you, nor any yeast anywhere on your property or in your territory. Get rid of all of it from all your homes.

¹The Canaanites (kay-nin-nights): The Canaanites were people who behaved very badly. They were utterly immoral. They worshiped gods of sex. The Canaanites were crude and rude. Their way of life was ugly and awful. They played dirty and were horribly cruel. They were a very bad influence on other people.

They lived in Palestine near the sea, and in such areas as Mount Carmel, and around Nazareth where Jesus grew up over a thousand years later. Some of them lived in the area of what is today Tel-Aviv, the capital of modern Israel.

But Rahab (ray-hab), who lived in Jericho, near the Jordan River, and who helped and saved Joshua's spies, was also a Canaanite. Believe it or not, she also became an ancestor, or ancestress, of the Jewish Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ!

The word "Canaanite" in Hebrew means "a businessman." The name Canaanite sometimes means all the different nations who lived in Canaan or Palestine. They were all very bad people.

The first man called Canaan was the grandson of Noah. He was the son of Ham, Noah's second son. (Genesis 10)

²The Hittites (hit-tights): The Hittites were a great ancient empire. They ruled over many other nations right across the Middle East. One reason why they became a great nation was because they made up a whole book or code of laws and rules to live by. Unfortunately, though, good laws and constitutions do not stop people from behaving immorally or badly. The result of their bad behaviour was that their empire began to lose its power, roughly around the time that the Israelites were about to leave Egypt.

The Hittites used to live up in North Syria, along the great Euphrates River, and also in the land that is now the country of Turkiye (tur-kee-ya, which used to be Turkey.) They stretched from the Black Sea right down to Lebanon, which is on the northern border of Israel.

The Hittites were the people who invented iron, and began the Iron Age in history. They were great horsemen, and claimed to be the first people to ride horses and chariots in that part of the world. That was another reason why they became so powerful. The other nations were scared of them.

The Hittites were descendents of Canaan, the grandson of Noah. Heth (cheht, ch as in loch), the second son of Canaan, was the father of the Hittite nation (**Genesis 10**). In Hebrew, the Hittites were called “the sons of Heth”.

Near his home at Hebron, Abraham bought a burial ground, or cemetery, from a Hittite. That was the first bit of land in the Promised Land that Abraham and his descendents would own. The nation of Israel took over the whole of Canaan roughly 600 years later.

Esau, Abraham’s grandson, married Hittite wives who behaved badly. His brother Jacob did not make the same mistake. He travelled way up north to get his wives, Leah (lee-a) and Rachel (ray-chel, ch as in church), from his mother’s family. They were believers in God.

³The Amorites (am-aw-rights): The Amorites were another strong nation who controlled the area to the north known as Assyria, between the Euphrates River and the Mediterranean Sea. They were very powerful in the time of Abraham. The greatest Amorite in history was probably King Hammurabi (Ham-moo-rah-bee), who gave his people a famous set of laws, one of the first codes of laws in history.

Hammurabi’s code of laws is sometimes compared with the Law of Moses that God gave to the Israelites after the exodus from Egypt. Some of Hammurabi’s laws are like Moses’ laws. Moses said, eg, You must not commit murder. Hammurabi said the same thing. But others are very different, eg, Moses said: You must love the Lord your God with all your heart. Hammurabi never said anything like that.

We have the same thing with laws today. Some laws of our countries are the same as the commandments in the Bible. But our nation's laws do not tell us to respect and obey God, and love him and be loyal to him and always put him first – or anything like that.

In the time of Moses there were Amorites living to the south of the Dead Sea who made it difficult for the Israelites to get to the Promised Land. Amorites living to the east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea were the first nation that Israel conquered when they were still under the leadership of Moses. The king of those Amorites was called Sihon (**See-chawn, ch as in loch**).

The Amorites were descendents of Canaan, Noah's grandson (Genesis 10).

⁴**The Hivites (chi-vights, ch as in loch, and the first "i" as in pin): The Hivites lived in Palestine, in the mountain country to the north of Jerusalem.** Their capital city was Shechem (**Sheh-chim, ch as in loch**), which later became the capital of Israel-in-the-North when the Hebrew nation was divided after the time of King Solomon.

In the time of Joshua, who took over the leadership of Israel after Moses, the Hivites from the town of Gibeon (gibee-yin) tricked Joshua and his leaders. They came to make a treaty with Israel. They lied to Joshua and the leaders by claiming that they had travelled a long, long way, for a very long time, to come to make this treaty. But in fact they lived only about 20 kilometres (**just over 12 miles**) to the north of Jerusalem. Because of this treaty that Israel made with them the town of Gibeon was able to escape being destroyed by the army of Israel as they conquered the Promised Land. When Joshua found out the truth, he made the Hivites living at Gibeon become servants of Israel.

The Hivites were descendents of Canaan, Noah's grandson (Genesis 10).

⁵**The Jebusites (je-boo-sights or y'voo-see): The Jebusites were the people who lived in the area of Jerusalem.** In those days it was called Jebus (**je-boos, or in Hebrew, y'voos**). The Jebusites had built a huge, very high stone wall around the town. A part of that wall can still be seen today. It is massive! It goes up in steps, each step being much higher than the height of a man.

To begin with the Israelites did defeat the Jebusites and burn the town. But the Jebusites managed to get back into the city and were able to live there for about 400 years. They were still there in the time of King Saul and the Prophet Samuel.

David, having been king of Judah in Hebron for seven years, then became king of all Israel. So he decided to move his capital closer to the rest of Israel. He wanted Jebus to be his capital and he called it Jerusalem. (**Salem (say-lim)**, just like the well-known word Shalom (**sha-lawm**), means Peace.) However, the cheeky Jebusites mocked and scorned David's army from the top of their great wall. They defied

David. But David's nephew and his men were able to find a secret way into Jebus, and defeat them. This well-defended city then became David's capital of Israel. It was actually in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. King Saul had belonged to the tribe of Benjamin while David was of the tribe of Judah.

The date of David's victory over the Jebusites in Jerusalem was roughly 1000 years before Christ.

The Jebusites were also descendants of Ham's son, Canaan. (Genesis 10).

From all this about the various Canaanite tribes we can see that Canaan's descendants had very strong personalities. Unfortunately many people with strong personalities are not godly.

in brilliant good order: God wanted it to be remembered that when the Israelites left Egypt they left in good order. They did not leave as if they were escaping desperately like refugees. God made it possible for them to leave without fear and without any kind of panic. They were even able to gather all sorts of expensive things from the Egyptians. The Egyptians were thoroughly scared of them. The Egyptian army made not the slightest attempt to arrest anyone or make things difficult for them in any way. The Israelites were able to leave with their heads held high and a big smile on their faces. All this was thanks to the wonderful way God had set them free. They were well-organised when they left, with no sign of any kind of desperation.

This is how things happen when God does them for us. When we have God's support things work out well.

13:8-10 REMEMBER THE EXODUS IN FUTURE

When in future you celebrate the Passover and the exodus you must tell your son the meaning and significance of the Passover. Say to him: This celebration is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.

This feast must be something to remind you of that wonderful experience, as if you had the word "EXODUS" written on your hand, or stamped on your forehead. This is to remind you to keep on talking about it. Use the feast to keep a record of what happened so that you do not lose sight of what the Passover was about. Do this so that you will always remember to talk about or discuss the law of the Lord. Never forget that the Lord brought you out of Egypt by his awesome power.

So ¹you will always owe it to him to obey him. That is why you must keep this feast as a national custom at the proper time every year.

¹you will always owe it to him to obey him: This is the sign that you are a true believer: you always obey God. If you trust him and have confidence in him you will obey him. If you won't obey him it is because you do not really trust him. You don't obey because you cannot truly rely on him. That means you do not properly believe in him.

By celebrating the Passover every year they would never forget what God had done for them when they were in Egypt as slaves. We also need to keep on remembering God's goodness to us, and to give him thanks and praise. This will help us to remain obedient and faithful to him.

13:11-13 REDEEM EVERY FIRSTBORN

The Lord is going to get you into the land of the Canaanites, just as he promised your forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God will give their land to you.

In return, you must give every firstborn to the Lord, as well as the firstborn of any animal that is yours. ¹The firstborn that are males are for the Lord.

But you may redeem every firstborn donkey by sacrificing a lamb in its place. If you do not buy it back from the Lord, or redeem it, then you are to offer it to the Lord by breaking its neck. The important thing to remember is that you must redeem every firstborn person among your sons.

¹The firstborn that are males are for the Lord: The idea, or principle, of this rule is that God always comes first. The family must put God first.

Where boys were concerned they had to be dedicated to God, and then could be bought back by the family by offering a sacrifice for them. In the case of animals they had to be slaughtered as a sacrifice to God. If an animal was needed, such as a donkey for transport, it could also be bought back by sacrificing a lamb in its place.

If the worshiper wanted to offer an expensive or useful animal to the Lord, he could do that. That would be the same as someone wanting to make a big donation of money to the church for some special reason. If he did offer a donkey, then he must not slaughter it the usual way of cutting its throat and draining its blood. He

must break its neck instead. That would be an offering of the whole animal, with its blood, to God. That animal would not be eaten, so its blood did not need to be drained out of it.

In those days the two most humane ways to kill an animal was to cut its throat or to break its neck. There was little suffering with these ways. Nowadays animals suffer much more. Many of them that provide us with food are kept in very cramped conditions, caged up or penned up for their whole life. This is in order to be able to feed millions of people living in cities. There just is not room to let all creatures roam around on farms anymore. In Moses' time they did not have such problems. Instead, they had other problems.

We need to remember that every time we eat meat an animal has been killed so that we can eat its flesh. The people in the Bible were not vegetarians. Everyone was ordered by God to eat lamb at the Passover Feast. Today thousands of animals are slaughtered every day in order to feed a nation. They die so that we may live.

When Noah built his ark God told him to take a pair of each animal and bird into it. But of the ones they could eat he was to take seven pairs. So when God saved Noah and his family and all the animals, some of those animals died to provide food.

The other thing God did was to use this idea of animals dying so that we can live, as a means of sacrificing animals for the sins of people. To get God's forgiveness people would offer a lamb to God as a sacrifice. A lamb does not struggle and squeal when its throat is cut, the way a pig would. This paved the way for God's great sacrifice of his Son. Jesus volunteered to take our sins on himself if we repent of them. Christ sacrificed his life and died, just that once, of his own free will. He did this so that we might live forever. So sacrifice is part of life. In fact, sacrifice is a necessary and very important part of life. It was God, our Creator and Father, who provided that awesome sacrifice for us so that we might go to heaven where all is clean and pure.

No one can get to heaven without sacrifice. No one can get to heaven without a sacrifice. No one can get to heaven without faith in the holy sacrifice of Christ Jesus.

13:14-16 WHAT IS THE PASSOVER FOR?

In the future, when your son asks you what this feast is for, and why we keep the Passover, then you tell him this: What the Lord did for us was amazing. By means of his astonishing power he brought us out of Egypt where we were helpless slaves.

We were in big trouble when ¹Pharaoh got angry and stubborn, and absolutely refused to let us go. Then the Lord killed every single firstborn throughout the land of Egypt. He killed them, man and beast - the whole lot, the people and the animals as well. That's how the Egyptians knew that this was done by God. Only God could have done such a thing. So that is the reason why I am sacrificing to the Lord. I am offering him every firstborn male I've got, and I am buying back from him, or redeeming, the firstborn of my sons. Since the Passover at the time of the Exodus, every firstborn belongs to the Lord.

This feast is like ²a sign. It is to remind you of the exodus the way a bracelet on your wrist would remind you of someone or something precious to you. It's a sign like a band around your head so that you never forget what the Lord did for us. The Lord brought us out of Egypt by his almighty power. That is what the Passover is always about.

¹Pharaoh got angry and stubborn: A big problem for people has always been the idea that “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” But this section helps us somewhat to understand the problem. The original Hebrew in verse 15 of the Bible says: “When Pharaoh hardened to let us go.” We would translate that as, “When Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let us go.” What this means is that Pharaoh hated the idea of releasing the slaves who worked for him. He resented what God told him to do. He became obstinate and difficult to talk to. He was rude and cheeky. He became furious and refused to listen to God and obey him.

Now the point of God hardening Pharaoh’s heart is this: When God told Pharaoh what to do, Pharaoh resented it and resisted God. God knew that Pharaoh would respond like that. The more God insisted that Pharaoh must do as he was told, the more Pharaoh rebelled against God’s order. Pharaoh, who was used to telling the whole nation of Egypt what to do, hated being told by God what to do. Pharaoh wanted to keep his slaves, and the thought of releasing them was frustrating and hateful to him. God knew how Pharaoh felt, yet he kept on making these demands through Moses and Aaron, his messengers. In that way God hardened Pharaoh’s heart. When you keep on telling someone something that they do not want to listen to, you harden their attitude. They become more irritated and annoyed. This causes them to become more stubborn.

So what do YOU think? Suppose a teacher tells a boy who has not done his work that he must finish it instead of going out to play. If the boy does not want to do this and becomes upset, starts to sulk, and gets into a bad mood, who is to blame?

God knew that he was telling Pharaoh to do something that Pharaoh would not like, and that he would get upset and bitter about it. But God was the boss, not Pharaoh. By insisting that Pharaoh obey him, when Pharaoh did not want to do that, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God argued with Pharaoh, which caused Pharaoh to argue with God. But if Pharaoh could give any order he liked to all the Egyptians and the Israelites because he was the king, why could God not give Pharaoh orders since God is the King of all kings?

It was not God who did anything wrong. The person who was guilty of doing wrong was Pharaoh. It is very foolish and stupid to try to blame God for what Pharaoh did.

²A sign: A sign was something to remind people. The Passover, celebrated every year, would remind the Israelites of the exodus. They would remember what God had done, and this would remind them to continue to trust God and obey him.

In verse 16 the Hebrew reads: “And it will be like a sign on your hand or wrist, and like signs between your eyes, or a headband.” What some very keen Jewish believers used to do many years later was this: they would write out the Ten Commandments on a tiny scroll, roll it up and then tie one copy around their wrist, like a watch, and another copy on a band around their head, above their eyes.

What is important is that we must make sure that we always remember

what God has done,

what God has said,

and what God has told us to do.

Signs are things that help people to remember. That was the purpose of the Passover festival each year. It was a sign to remind all the people of the exodus, so that they would remember what God had done for them. That would also remind them of what God had commanded them to do.

13:17-18 THE ISRAELITES LEAVE EGYPT

Now when Pharaoh let the Israelites leave Egypt, God did not lead them along the road that goes to the territory of ¹the Philistines. Today we call that territory the Gaza Strip. That way was actually the shortest distance from Egypt to Canaan, the Promised Land. This was because God realised that if the people had to face the prospect of war, they might very likely regret that they had left the safety of Egypt. In that case they would probably return to Egypt.

So God turned them away from going to the north, and took them to the south, along the desert road leading ²toward the Red Sea. Today this part of the Red Sea is called the Gulf of Suez. So the people of Israel left Egypt. They set off ³organised like an army.

¹The Philistines: The Philistines were settling in the area of Gaza at about the same time that the Israelites were leaving Egypt. The Philistines originally came from the island of Crete in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. For many years they had been farming in Gaza, taking their harvests back across the sea to Crete. Eventually they decided to go and settle in Gaza because it was a good farming area.

²Toward the Red Sea: We do not know exactly what route the Israelites took from Egypt, except that it was in a south easterly direction. This would take them toward the Bitter Lakes that are to the north of the Gulf of Suez, and then on toward the Red Sea.

In Hebrew, the Red Sea is called the Reed Sea. It was a marshy area where reeds or rushes grew. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, long before Christ was born, the Greek translators called it the Red Sea.

³Organised like an army: The Hebrew says that the Israelites set off from Egypt “in fives”. In those days, when an army was on the move, it was divided into five sections.

- **One section went in front.** That was the vanguard. Its duty was to look for the enemy or to look for a place to camp for the night.
- **Another section followed at the back, called the rear guard.** Its duty was to protect the rest from any attack from behind.
- **There were also two groups on either side of the army, called the wings.** They were to protect the army from an attack from the side, or the flank, which is very dangerous.
- **In the middle was the main body of the army.**

Thus they set off organised like an army in five sections. Sooner or later the Israelites, who had been slaves all their lives, would have to learn to fight for their nation. All the nations in the area they were going to were their enemies. The Israelites would have to graduate from being slaves to becoming soldiers in one generation, and very quickly.

Once we become Christians we have to learn to live like Christians. This is what the whole Bible is for. It is to train us to do God’s will. It is to teach us what is wrong

so that we are able to stand up to what is wrong. The Bible shows us how to stand up for what is right. Christians are God's army. We need good organisation and good training.

13:19 JOSEPH'S BONES

As the Israelites left Egypt Moses made sure that he took Joseph's bones with him. Hundreds of years before, Joseph had made the younger Israelites make a special promise. He made them ¹swear an oath. Joseph said: One day God will certainly come to take charge of you to get you back to the land of Canaan. When that happens, ²you must take my bones from here in Egypt. Take them with you to Canaan. You must promise me that you will do this. Swear to it!

¹Swear an oath: An oath is a serious kind of promise. An oath is a promise made before God. The basic idea of an oath is that if someone breaks his oath or his promise, then God should punish him.

Moses had carefully studied Joseph's prophecy and instructions. We can see how carefully Moses had studied Joseph's dying words if we compare what Joseph himself said in Genesis 50, with Joseph's words written here in Exodus 13 about three hundred years later.

Genesis 50: **Joseph made the younger Israelites swear an oath:**

"God will certainly take control of you, and then you must take my bones from here."

Exodus 13: Moses said that **Joseph made the younger Israelites swear an oath:**

"God will certainly take control of you, and then you must take my bones from here with you."

²You must take my bones: When people make a promise, and especially when they take an oath, it means that they believe strongly in what they are saying.

Joseph had been very successful in Egypt, and he had spent his whole adult life in Egypt. He even died in Egypt. But for him Egypt was never really his home. He believed that Canaan was his true home, because God had promised it to his father Jacob, his grandfather Isaac and his great grandfather Abraham. Joseph believed in God, and believed what God had said and promised. In fact, God had sworn an oath

to Abraham that he would give the land of Canaan to his descendants. Joseph never lost sight of this. His heart was always in Canaan, and this was his wish as he lay dying.

When anyone dies, his body rots away quite quickly, but his bones last a very long time. Bones will last for hundreds of years.

Joseph wanted his bones buried in God's Promised Land. As he died he made sure that that would happen by making those younger people promise to do what he wanted. That promise was passed on from generation to generation until the time of Moses. Although Moses and the other leaders must have been very busy organising the people to leave Egypt, they did not forget to do what Joseph had asked long ago.

What we need to remember is that this life is not as important as the next life. This world is not our home.

Heaven is our only true home.

However successful or happy or useful we may be in this life, we must always remember that we belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever we are, whatever we do, or whatever we are able to achieve here, what God wants is that we end up in the place he is preparing for us. That must be what we also want, what we want more than anything else.

13:20-22 GOD'S CLOUD LEADS ISRAEL

The Israelites packed up their tents at Succoth (soo-cot), the Tent City, and moved to Etham (eh-tum) where they pitched their tents. Etham was on the border between Egypt's Nile Delta and the Sinai Desert (sigh-nigh). It was somewhere near where the Suez Canal is today, not very far from the Red Sea. They were somewhere on the main road that leads to the south of Palestine, where the mountains begin. It is the road across the Sinai Desert to Beersheba (beer-sheeba OR in Hebrew, b'ehr-sh'va).

The Lord was leading them. By day he guided them along the way by means of a tall cloud, like a giant pillar. At night it became a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel during the day and during the night.

The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day or the pillar of fire by night. It remained in front of the people as they travelled.

Chapter 14

14:1-4 THE ISRAELITES CHANGE DIRECTION

The Lord contacted Moses again. He said to Moses:

Give orders to the Israelites. Tell them that they must turn back and set up camp at ¹a place next to the sea. The Lord told them exactly where to go. He gave Moses the names of three places close together. You must pitch your tents there, right by the sea.

Then Pharaoh will come to the conclusion that the Israelites do not know where to go and are lost in the countryside. It will look to him as though the Israelites have got themselves trapped right up against the sea. He will think that they cannot get past the sea to the desert on the other side.

I shall then encourage Pharaoh to want to chase after them. But do not worry because in this way I am going to use Pharaoh and his whole army to get all the Egyptians to learn to respect me deeply. So the Israelites did what the Lord told Moses to do. They turned round, and went towards the sea. They pitched their tents right next to the sea.

¹A place next to the sea: The Israelites were heading for the Sinai desert that lies between Egypt and Palestine. God then told Moses to turn them away from their course, and get them to head towards the sea that lies somewhere along where the Suez Canal runs today.

God told them exactly where to go. The first place on the map was called The Entrance (**Pi**) (**pee**) to the Caves. The second place was a small fort called The Tower. And the third place was a hill (**or Baal**) (**bah-al**) where the Egyptians believed a horrible demon called Zephon (**Ts'fawn**) lived. These three places were near the sea.

In those days the people knew these three places and the sea next to them. Today, thousands of years later, no one knows where they were. [But, of course, people like to guess.] What is important is that the people who lived there at the time, the Egyptians, knew where the place was. When a whole country knows where a place is, and what happened there, then we cannot deny that the miracle of the exodus happened, even though we do not know exactly where it took place. What is important is that Pharaoh knew exactly where the Israelites were camped, and took his whole army there.

What we should remember is that Moses has told us where they camped. But because so much time has passed, we do not know where the caves were, where The Tower was, or which hill it was where the demon was supposed to live. All we do know is that the great miracle of the exodus took place somewhere near the Suez Canal, on the border between Egypt and the Sinai Desert, and in the general area of the Red Sea. You can easily find the Egypt and the Sinai Desert, as well as the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, on a map.

14:5-9 PHARAOH'S ARMY CHASES THE ISRAELITES

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had gone, that they had run away from Egypt, Pharaoh completely changed his mind about them. So did his officials. They asked the question: What is this that we have done? We have let our Israelite slaves go free! They will no longer serve us. We should not have allowed them to go!

So Pharaoh ordered his royal military chariot to get ready to leave. He got all his people to go along with his decision.

He took his best chariots with him, six hundred elite chariots. Along with them he took all the chariots of Egypt, and even loaded ¹a third soldier onto every chariot.

With this powerful army assembled, the Lord made Pharaoh, the Commander-in-Chief of Egypt's military, determined to bring the Israelites back. So he and his force set off and chased after the Israelites. As for the Israelites, they were leaving Egypt and slavery in high spirits.

The Egyptians raced after the Israelites and caught up with the Israelites camping by the sea. Pharaoh's whole military force turned up there, his horses and chariots and riders, and his army. They reached the area at the Entrance-to-the-Caves, with the Hill-of-the-Demon in sight.

¹A third soldier onto every chariot: In the Egyptian army there were usually two soldiers on a chariot. The one was to drive the chariot and the other was to do the fighting. In this case, Pharaoh wanted to do two things:

First, he wanted to get to the Israelites as fast as possible, so he used his chariots instead of his foot-soldiers.

Secondly, he wanted as much of his army as possible to bring all the Israelites back because there were so many of them. So Pharaoh decided to load up an extra man, so that there were three soldiers carried by each chariot.

In those times the Hittites (hit-tights) were the only nation who usually went into war with three soldiers on each chariot. The Hittites were the people who invented the chariot for the purpose of fighting wars.

14:10-12 THE ISRAELITES PANIC

As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites spotted his army approaching. They got an awful shock when they saw that the Egyptian military had set out after them. The Israelites were absolutely terrified, and cried out to the Lord to save them.

But their prayer was just part of their panic. They turned against Moses and argued with him. They criticised him for the trouble they were now in. They became angry and bitter toward him because of their great fear. They were rude to him and shouted: Why did you bring us out of Egypt? You have brought us here to die in the desert. You should have left us to die in Egypt. There was plenty of space in Egypt to bury all of us in proper graves. Did you get us out here because you thought that there was not¹enough room for our graves in Egypt? Why have you done this to us?

This is what we warned you about when we were in Egypt. We told you to leave us alone and let us serve the Egyptians because it would be better for us to serve the Egyptians as slaves than to die in the desert. We told you that. But now look what you've done!

¹Enough room for our graves in Egypt: The people were criticising Moses. In Egypt the people live along the Nile River. The rest of the country, on either side of the river, is all desert, so there is no shortage of space for burial grounds. The people were being sarcastic towards Moses. They were panicking because they were terribly scared. They accused him of making a mess of things. They were taking their fear out on Moses and blaming him for the danger they were now in.

14:13-14 MOSES SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE

The way Moses spoke to the angry, panicking people was marvellous. He spoke like a truly great leader. He just said: Don't be scared. Don't panic! Don't give up. Just stay where you are. You are going to witness the Lord's salvation. He is going to save you. You will see what the Lord will do for you today, because those Egyptians whom you can now see, you will never see again.

The Lord will fight the Egyptian army for you, and you must just keep your nerve and stay where you are. So don't do anything.

14:15-18 GOD TELLS MOSES WHAT TO DO

Moses was able to speak to the people like this despite their panic and rudeness because of what God had explained to him. God had said to Moses: There is no need for you to tell me what the people have been saying to you. Tell the Israelites to get ready to move again. I shall tell you what you must do, and what I am going to do.

What you must do is pick up your special staff once more. Then stretch your arm out towards the sea and divide the waters. That will allow the Israelites to go through the sea on dry land.

What I am going to do is to work on the way the Egyptians think. I am going to let them suppose that they can chase after you people. I shall encourage them to do that.

In this way the Egyptians are going to learn that I am the Lord, the true God. They will respect me greatly when they find out what happens to Pharaoh and to his chariot army and to his horsemen.

At this point all the talking about the exodus stops. It is now time for action.

14:19-20 THE ANGEL OF GOD MOVES THE CLOUD

Suddenly the angel of God, who had been leading the huge crowd of Israelites, moved away from the front of the people. He went behind them, and he took the pillar of cloud from the front so that it stood at the back of them.

The cloud came between the powerful army of Egypt and the helpless camp of Israel. And because of the cloud it was so dark on the Egyptian side that no one in the army could see anything. They could not move. They just had to stay where they were. But on the Israelite side the cloud caused light to shine through the night, and the people were encouraged. The result of the cloud moving like this was that there was no contact at all between the two sides for the whole night. The angel of God kept them apart.

14:21-22 THE ISRAELITES WALK THROUGH THE SEA

Then Moses raised his arm out towards the sea. When he did that the Lord pushed back the sea. He used a strong wind that blew from the hot, dry desert in the east to do this. The wind blew the whole night, and turned the sea into an empty beach, a completely dry sea-bed. The waters of the sea were split in two with the empty sea-bed between them.

The Israelites simply went forward, right through the middle of the sea, across the dry sand. On either side of them there was a wall of water, like a giant wave - but it was a wave that just stood still and held the sea back behind it, like a dam wall. These waves kept the sea at bay for them while they crossed over. There was one huge wave on their right, and another huge wave on their left.

Many people do not believe that this happened.

-First, it seems impossible to them.

-Secondly, there are so many people who do not believe that this could possibly have happened. So it can make one embarrassed to stand up for what the Bible says.

But remember the following:

First, this is the greatest miracle in the Old Testament part of the Bible. The faith of all the Israelites and all the Jews and all the Christians was based on this amazing

miracle that God performed for his people. The rest of the Bible, from Exodus to the Prophets, and from the Gospels to Revelation, believes that this miracle happened. The whole Bible supports this wonderful event.

Then, it is stated clearly three times that the people crossed over through the sea on dry land: it says “dry land” in verse 16, here in 22 and in 29. On top of that, the people who were there said that they crossed over through the sea on dry land, in chapter 15 verse 19.

Furthermore, there is one miracle in the Bible that is even greater than this. If we believe in this astonishing miracle of the exodus, we shall be able to believe in the even more wonderful miracle of Jesus rising back to life from the dead and going back to heaven in his human body, as a man. He came to earth from heaven in the body of a baby.

On top of all that, God has told us that he is going to perform an even greater miracle at the end of history. He is going to get everyone who believes in him out of the grip that death has on their bodies. He is going to raise all of us from the dead. He is going to lift us up from the earth and take us into heaven. We shall go to heaven in our body just as Jesus did. This is the hope that we must believe in. If God can get us to heaven, he could raise his Son from the dead. If God could do that, then he could get his people to cross the sea on dry sand. It's really all about believing in God.

One more thing: Why not talk to someone who genuinely believes what the Bible says? There are a good number of people who believe that what the Bible says is true, even though there are so many people who do not believe, or are not sure. Find someone who really believes. One is not stupid to believe this.

14:23-25 THE EGYPTIAN ARMY GETS INTO TROUBLE

¹Ignoring the walls of water on either side, the Egyptians chased recklessly after the Israelites. All Pharaoh's horses and his chariots and horsemen galloped right into the middle of the sea across the dry sea-bed.

God, of course, had a bird's eye view of what was going on. Early in the morning, before it was light, God targeted the Egyptian army. God looked down at them from the pillar of fire and the cloud. ²Using the cloud, God threw the army into chaos.

³The wheels of the chariots turned the wrong way. They wobbled so much that it was difficult for the charioteers to drive their chariots. The Egyptians shouted: Let's get right away from the Israelites because the Lord is fighting for them against us!

¹Ignoring the walls of water on either side: The Egyptians must have been mad!

They were crazy to ignore those two huge walls of sea-water on either side of them. But this is what happens to people whose heart or attitude becomes hard. They do stupid and reckless things.

²Using the cloud: In the book of Psalms there is a song about how God helps us.

When we are in trouble and turn to him, God will use his great power to help us. The writer of Psalm 77 reminds us of what God did for the Israelites during the exodus. That Psalm says that there came a heavy downpour of rain, and violent lightning and thunder. This tells us that the Egyptian army ran into such a powerful storm that they became confused. Discipline among the horsemen broke down. There was also a strong earth tremor. Then the sea-walls collapsed and allowed the sea to flood back to its original state. This occurred when Moses lifted up his staff on the other side of the Red Sea. He did that when the Egyptian chariots were speeding across the dry empty sand of the sea. **Read Psalm 77.16-20.**

³The wheels of the chariots turned: It is difficult to know exactly what happened to the wheels of the chariots. In ancient times, before the time of Christ, when experts translated the Bible into other languages like Greek or for readers in Syria, they translated this as, “The wheels of the chariots got bogged down in the mud.”

The original Hebrew just says, “the wheels turned away” or turned in the wrong direction. This is the sort of thing that happens when wheels get caught in a rut and thus go in the wrong direction and cannot be turned into the right direction. The problem began when they got to the middle of where the sea normally was. The chariots suddenly got out of control. It was this that caused the charioteers who were driving the chariots to panic. The chariot drivers were struggling to turn them around and get them back to the edge of the sea. To turn a whole army around is a very difficult and frustrating exercise. To do this when everyone in the army is panicking and shouting and screaming and getting in one another's way is all but impossible.

14:26-28 THE WHOLE EGYPTIAN ARMY IS DROWNED

The Lord now gave Moses this instruction: Stretch your hand out towards the sea so that the waters will return and flood over the Egyptians and over their chariots and over their horsemen.

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea flooded back to its original place just as the morning began. The Egyptians were unable to get away from the huge flood racing toward them. They could only flee right into the way of the disaster rushing to drown them.

This was how the Lord shook off the Egyptians into the sea. ¹The waters surged back and covered the chariot force and the horsemen and all the army of Pharaoh. The Egyptians who were coming after the Israelites ended up drowned in the sea. Not a single soldier survived.

¹The waters surged back and covered the chariot force:

Long ago, somewhere around the year 1800, some French farm workers were harvesting the crops. The government sent soldiers to help them.

During a lunch break one farm worker was reading his Bible. Suddenly he let out a yell: Praise the Lord! This irritated the French soldiers who served under Napoleon and who, like him, were strong atheists (ay-thee-ists). They did not believe in God. One of the soldiers demanded, What was that yell for?

The farm worker answered, I've just read how God made it possible for the Israelites to walk right across the Red Sea on dry land.

The soldier replied, That's nonsense! The scientists have discovered where the Israelites crossed the sea. It was at a place so shallow that the water only covered their ankles. They just waded across. There was no real miracle.

The farm worker knew nothing about scientists so he could not argue. He simply went on reading his Bible.

After a little while he again let out a yell: Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Now what? snarled the soldier, thoroughly annoyed.

The farm worker replied excitedly:

I am reading how the Lord drowned the whole of the Egyptian army in the sea where the water was only ankle deep!

People do not want to believe some of the things written in the Bible. The problem is that it is impossible to argue with everything the Bible says that people do not like or agree with.

14:29-31 THE ISRAELITES WATCHED WHAT GOD DID

The Israelites walked on dry land right through the sea. On either side of them, to their right and to their left there was a wall of water, like a dam, protecting them from the sea.

On that day the Lord saved Israel from the power of the angry Egyptians, and gave them a marvellous victory over their former masters who had treated them so cruelly. The whole of Israel saw the bodies of the dead Egyptians floating on the water near the sea shore. This was proof that they were now a free nation.

The nation of Israel witnessed the magnificent power that the Lord applied against the Egyptian's terrifying army. Because of what they saw the Lord do the Israelites were in awe of the Lord and gained complete confidence in him. They also respected and trusted Moses, the leader that the Lord had given them.

Chapter 15

The Israelites now held a great celebration. As they celebrated they sang a song. They sang it with Moses.

The Israelites were happier than you could imagine. They had just watched one of the greatest miracles in all history. It was also one of the greatest military victories in all history. As a result of it they were at last free, free after more than a life-time of slavery and fear and suffering.

We do not know what the music was like, but we do know what they were singing. This song, although it is so ancient, gives us a good idea of how people think when they have got confidence in God. These are the sort of feelings that come out of people's souls when they realise how good God has been to them. This is what worship is actually like to true believers in God.

This song of praise is the build-up to the greater victory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Both the exodus and the resurrection are what prepare us for the resurrection of all the dead at the end of the world. When that happens, we are going to sing another song that will not be very different from this one. When God saves us from sin, from death, from all life's troubles and suffering and unhappiness, we are going to praise him with thrilling joy. When we see the devil destroyed, and all the harm he has done, and all the evil in the world and in its history – when we see all this come to a permanent and glorious end, our worship is going to be very exciting indeed!

Try to get a feel of the relief and excitement in this song of victory for God that Moses and the Israelites sang to the Lord.

15:1-5 A SONG OF VICTORY FOR GOD

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord. It was a song of victory and praise to God who had done this wonderful, glorious thing for them. This is what they said - It went something like this:

I'll sing a song of thanks and praise to the Lord.

He is magnificent and highly, highly respected!

He ambushed the horses and their riders in the sea.

The Lord gives me support and confidence, and something to sing about.

This Lord of mine has achieved for me a stunning victory. So I shall praise him.

He is the God of my ancestors, and I shall honour him.

The Lord is a true soldier and a great general.

The Lord has a marvellous reputation. He deserves to be honoured.

*He got rid of Pharaoh's chariots and his powerful army
by trapping them in the sea.*

*The best of their soldiers, and even their extra soldiers,
all drowned in 'the Red Sea.*

The whole lot perished! They were all destroyed!

The roaring, surging waves overwhelmed them.

They sank right to the bottom of the deep sea like a rock.

¹The Red Sea: In Hebrew this is called the Sea of Reeds, and we still do not know whether it means somewhere at the Red Sea or somewhere at a lake or sea that is now part of the Suez Canal. But in another way that whole area of the Middle East is known as the Red Sea. Everyone connects this miracle with the Red Sea.

15:6-8 THE MIRACLE OF THE RED SEA

Lord, your strength is amazing. It is glorious and majestic.

With your power, Lord, you utterly shattered the enemy.

With the greatness of your splendid majesty you overthrew and ruined those who rose up to challenge you.

You got very angry, and your anger destroyed them as fire destroys straw.

You blew with your mouth on the sea, and a strong wind piled the waters up into a great heap.

Instead of the flowing tide, the waters stood still, as if they had turned into a massive wall of ice.

All the waves and that vast amount of water thickened like snow, right in the heart of the sea.

It was ¹an amazing miracle!

¹An amazing miracle: This is the greatest miracle in the Old Testament. What is so remarkable is that the whole nation of Israel was able to escape safely by walking on dry land right across the Red Sea to the desert on the other side. When the Egyptian army tried to follow them it was completely destroyed. The whole nation of Israel watched the Lord destroy the whole army of Egypt. Not one military person survived, not a single one. Pharaoh was also drowned.

15:9-12 GOD DESTROYED THE ENEMY

The enemy thought: I shall chase them and catch them.

I shall conquer them and have a good time ¹looting them.

I'm going to ²take revenge on them.

*This is a good chance to attack them and get back control over them
and make them suffer for what they have done to us.*

*But you, Lord, just blew with your breath and that produced a great
wind.*

It caused the sea to flood and overwhelm them.

They sank under the sea like a lump of lead falling into water.

They were gone, dead and buried,

swept away under the powerful and awesome avalanche of water.

There are no other gods who can compare with you, Lord.

You alone are ³majestic and ⁴holy.

*You are awesome and splendid and famous,
and you do such marvellous things.*

*You used your power to save us, and so the earth simply swallowed up
the Egyptian army.*

¹Looting: Looting is what soldiers usually did when they won a battle or marched through an enemy country. They would take whatever they liked. They would steal things and even destroy people's homes. If anyone tried to stop them, they would kill him. They would do exactly as they liked, and were greedy and cruel. They did not care what trouble or damage or suffering they caused.

When the Israelites had left Egypt, the people of Egypt had given them many lovely and useful gifts. The soldiers were now keen to get their hands on those valuable things. They would keep them for themselves.

²Take revenge: God had punished the Egyptians when Pharaoh and his leaders and the Egyptian people had refused to let Israel go. The worst punishment was when God had killed all the firstborn Egyptians and their firstborn animals. Now

the soldiers saw a chance to take revenge on the Israelites and kill many of them without any mercy.

³Majestic: Majesty means like a king, the greatest person in the whole land. He is the person who is most respected, and should always be obeyed and loved. He is the person that the whole country is proud of and honours without fail.

⁴Holy: “HOLY” is a difficult word for us to understand, but it is a most important word to get to understand. God is holy.

Holy means that the Lord is different, special, and pure. Holy is connected with worship. It means perfect. It means better. It means the best there can possibly be. It means 100%. The word holy means splendid, magnificent and marvellous.

Because God is so holy he is someone who should be honoured, and who should never be criticised. Holy means that God is perfectly good.

If people who serve God love him deeply, do what is right and behave well and care for people, they too should be respected and listened to. People can never be 100% as God is, but they can be good if they listen to God, and not bad like those who disobey God. People can be holy by believing in God, by loving him, and by obeying him and trusting him.

But if those who are supposed to serve God and be religious, behave in a shameful or unreliable way so that you cannot trust them, then they are NOT holy, even if they work for the church or claim to serve God or say that they are religious.

15:13-18 GOD WILL GET US TO OUR HOME

You love us, Lord. You love your people, and you are very kind to us.

You have saved us. You reclaimed us and recovered us.

You got us out of that mess and all that suffering, and now you will lead us.

You took us out of slavery, and you have set us free.

We now know that you will use your awesome power

to take us to our new home,

a good and holy place where we can worship you.

That's where we shall at last be able to rest and be at peace.

The nations will hear what you have done for us.

They are going to be extremely worried and very scared.

Great nervousness will grip ¹the Philistines (fil-is-tighns)

when we march toward their country.

Then other countries will also be upset:

²The chiefs of the people of Edom (ee-dim) will panic,

and ³the rulers of the people of Moab (moh-ab OR in Hebrew, maw-av)

will be gripped by uncontrollable trembling.

All the people living in ⁴Canaan (kay-nin),

the land that God has promised to give to us, will despair.

They will become hopelessly disorganised and just give up

when they hear what God has done for us.

When we get there these people will become frightened.

They will be so overawed and scared that they will become timid

and not dare to oppose us.

Because of your power, Lord, they will be terrified.

They will not be able to think.

They will not know what to do.

They will remain frozen stiff with helplessness

until your people, Lord, have gone past them.

They will not be able to make a move

until the people that you set free, Lord, have passed by.

We belong to you, so you will be on our side,

and our enemies will be helpless.

You are going to get your people to the Promised Land.

You will settle them safely and permanently,

to live in the good land you, Lord, want to give them.

That is where you will set up your holy religion for us, Lord.

You will set it up safe and sound by your power.

There, in the Promised Land, the Lord will rule forever and ever.

¹The Philistines: The Philistines lived in what we call the Gaza Strip. That is the first land one comes to if one goes from Egypt to Palestine along the coastal road that runs near the Mediterranean Sea. That coastal road is the shortcut from Egypt to Palestine.

²The chiefs of the people of Edom: Edom was a country to the south of the Dead Sea. Today it is a part of the country called Jordan through which the River Jordan runs down into the Dead Sea.

In those times the people of Edom called their leaders “chiefs.” This was before they decided to call them kings. When experts called archaeologists (**ar-key-ol-ajists**) dug up ancient ruins, they found that at about the time the Israelites left Egypt, the leaders of the Edomites were called chiefs, not kings. So we have proof that the Bible is accurate as history at this point.

³The rulers of the people of Moab (moh-ab OR in Hebrew, maw-av): **Moab was the country to the north of Edom and on the east side of the Dead Sea.** It was also part of what is today the country of Jordan.

In the Hebrew version of the Bible the rulers of Moab have a strange title. They are called “rams.” The archaeologists have also discovered that the leaders or rulers of Moab were called rams in those days, before they became kings later on. Our English Bible translates “rams” as “leaders”. Rams, of course, are the alpha males in a flock of sheep. Moab was good sheep farming country. Here again we have proof that the Bible was recording the truth in those days when the exodus took place.

While we spell Moab with a “b” at the end, Hebrew speakers pronounce it as “Maw-av”. “Av” is the Hebrew word for “father.” The father and founder of the Moab nation was Lot, the nephew of Abraham. Abraham was the father of both the Israelite and Jewish peoples. Hebrew speakers pronounce Abraham’s name as Avraham.

⁴Canaan (kay-nin): Canaan today is Israel and Palestine. It was the country with the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and the Jordan River to the east. It also included a lot of farming land to the east of the Jordan River. In those days there were a number of different nations living in Canaan. One of those nations, who lived in what is now the Gaza Strip on the eastern Mediterranean coast, was the Philistines.

Canaan is written as “k’na-un” in Hebrew. That is why it is spelt strangely in English.

15:19-21 THE WOMEN CELEBRATE THE VICTORY

Then Pharaoh's horse, with his chariot, galloped across the sea-bed, together with his horsemen. When they were on their way across, the Lord brought the waters of the sea back over them. But the Israelites had walked on dry land right through the sea.

Miriam, who was the sister of Aaron the High Priest, was herself a prophetess. When the Israelites saw what had happened to their enemies, Miriam took out her ¹tambourine (tam-baw-reen) to make music and to dance and ²sing. All the women joined in with her, with tambourines and with dances, to celebrate ³this amazing victory and to praise God who had destroyed the powerful and dreadful Egyptian army.

Miriam sang for them this chorus: He's the greatest!

Sing to the Lord, for he is terrific, magnificent, superb!

He ambushed the horse and its rider right in the middle of the sea.

¹tambourine: The tambourine (tam-baw-reen) is like the top part of a miniature drum, with tiny bells around the rim. It is held in the one hand and shaken, and also beaten with the other hand in time to the music. It is very light, and can be easily carried around. People liked to sing to its rattle-n-beat, especially women and girls. A tambourine was usually used when people were feeling very happy.

²Sing: It is quite likely that Miriam had a beautiful voice. Yet she was old, well into her 80's!

³This amazing victory: This was one of the greatest military victories in history.

- It was one of history's most complete military victories. Exodus 14 says that not one single Egyptian survived.
- It was one of history's most spectacular military victories. No Israelite fought at all. They all just watched the Egyptian army drown.
- It was one of history's most divine military victories. God, alone, destroyed the whole Egyptian force. No one else was involved in the battle. The sea did the conquering. The timing of the return of the waters in two huge masses, crashing together where the chariots were, was miraculous.
- It was one of history's greatest surprise turn-around celebrations. To begin with the whole nation was in a state of panic. But it ended when a crowd of

women, who had witnessed the end of the Egyptian army, got together to dance and sing a song of triumph. They celebrated the utter defeat of one of the world's most powerful military machines of those times.

15:22-25a THE PROBLEM OF NO WATER

Then Moses took the people of Israel away from the Red Sea, and they went towards ¹the desert. They walked for three days in the desert and then found that there was no water to be had.

They moved on and came to a place called ²Marah (mah-rah) where there was water, but the water there at Marah was too salty to drink. It tasted bitter. That is why they called the place Marah, because Marah means “bitter.”

So the people complained about the lack of water to drink. They criticised Moses. They said: Thanks to you, we've got no water. You got us into this desperate and horrible mess.

Moses turned to the Lord and prayed. He begged God for help. In answer to his prayer the Lord pointed out to Moses a certain type of tree. God explained to Moses that he must take ³a branch from it and fling it into the water. As a result the water became nice to drink.

¹The desert: This is the desert on the east side of what is now the Suez Canal. It is called the Desert of Shur (**shoor**). “Shur” is Hebrew for a wall. Some experts think that this “Wall” was the name given to the string of forts that were built in those days along the line of what today is the Suez Canal. Once one crosses the Suez Canal from Egypt one is in a real desert, very dry and very hot. The need for water is then very great.

²Marah (mah-rah): Marah is on the other side of the Red Sea from Egypt. It is a few miles inland from the sea.

Marah is a Hebrew word. It means “bitterness”, the kind of bitterness that causes misery and grief and sadness. Marah is the way you feel when you get upset or depressed.

In this case, Marah means “salty.” When one is very thirsty and the only water available is too salty to drink, it is a very bitter and frustrating experience. When fresh water becomes rather salty it is called brackish water.

When one is very thirsty, or desperately thirsty, pure, clean water is the loveliest or sweetest thing to drink. Nothing else in the whole world tastes as good.

That is what Jesus meant when he said:

If anyone is really thirsty he should come to me to drink.

³**A branch: The Hebrew word means a tree or a piece of wood that comes from a tree.** The word branch was used in the Bible to describe the coming Messiah. He would be part of the people of Israel the way a branch is part of a tree. The miraculous way in which the branch changed the salty or bitter water into pure, sweet tasting water is a clear illustration of what the Messiah would do to God's people. He will take away or satisfy our thirst, when we find this life too hot and hard to handle. He will turn our bitter past into a sweet future.

15:25b-27 WHAT GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO DO

At the place they called Marah, which means bitterness, God made a rule and a law for his people. That was where ¹God decided to test them. Would his people trust him and obey him, or would they not?

God said to them: It is most important that you listen to what the Lord your God says. You must do what God says is right. You must pay attention to what God decides. You have to keep all his rules. If you do this, if you do as I tell you, then I shall not make any of ²the plagues and diseases that happened to the Egyptians, come upon you.

Then the nation came to a place called Elim (ee-lim OR in Hebrew, eh-lim). ³Elim means the place of trees. There were twelve springs of water there, and seventy palm trees. They camped there by the water. It was a relief to be there after the harsh, dry desert.

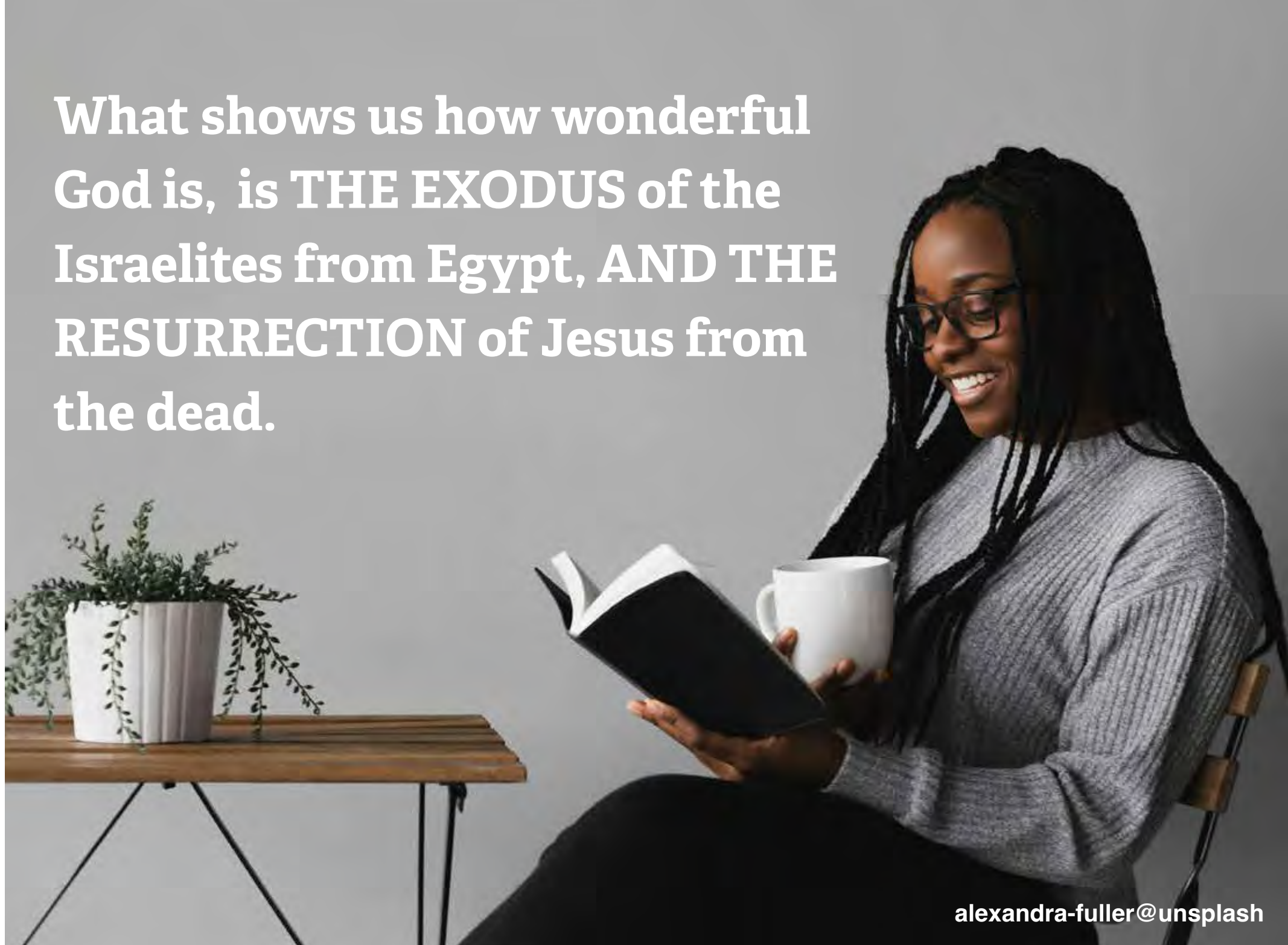
¹**God decided to test them: God sets tests for his people in the same way that teachers set tests for students to see if they are learning properly.** It is when things go wrong that God can see whether believers trust him. If they really trust him they will obey him. God let the Israelites run out of water and get very thirsty, to see how they would behave. **If people genuinely trust God they will do what is right, even when things go wrong.**

²The plagues and diseases: God made it quite clear that the reason why he punished the Egyptians with those plagues and diseases was because they would not listen to him. If any Egyptians did listen to him, he did not punish them. For example, at one stage Moses told them that God was going to send a terrible hail storm that would kill people or animals outside in the fields. He warned the Egyptians to bring their servants and animals out of the fields and into buildings. Those Egyptians who listened to him saved their servants and animals. Those Egyptians who ignored him lost their servants and animals. [Exodus 9]

³Elim means the place of trees: Elim is a large valley between the Wall Desert (called Shur (shoor) in Hebrew) and the next Clay Desert, which is called Sin (seen) in Hebrew. In the Valley of Trees, called Elim, lots of grass grew, as well as trees. The Israelites even found some springs of water and some palm trees. This was very encouraging after their hot, dry travel through the sandy Wall Desert. The next desert, the Clay Desert, would not be so hard to travel through. The Clay Desert goes all the way down to Mount Sinai (**sigh-nigh**) in the south.



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THE NEXT SEVEN VOLUMES 3 to 8 ARE IN PRODUCTION.

*(Further volumes 9 to 12 are to be planned, researched and written, God willing.)



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